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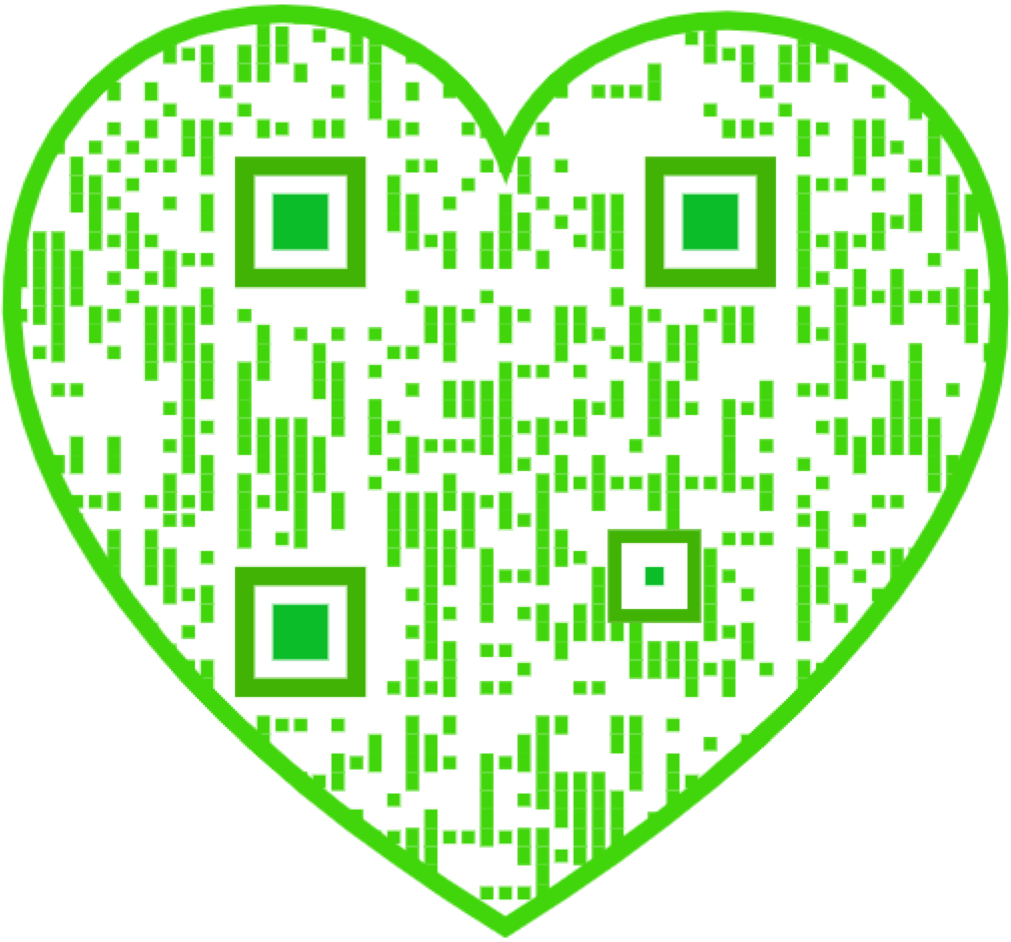

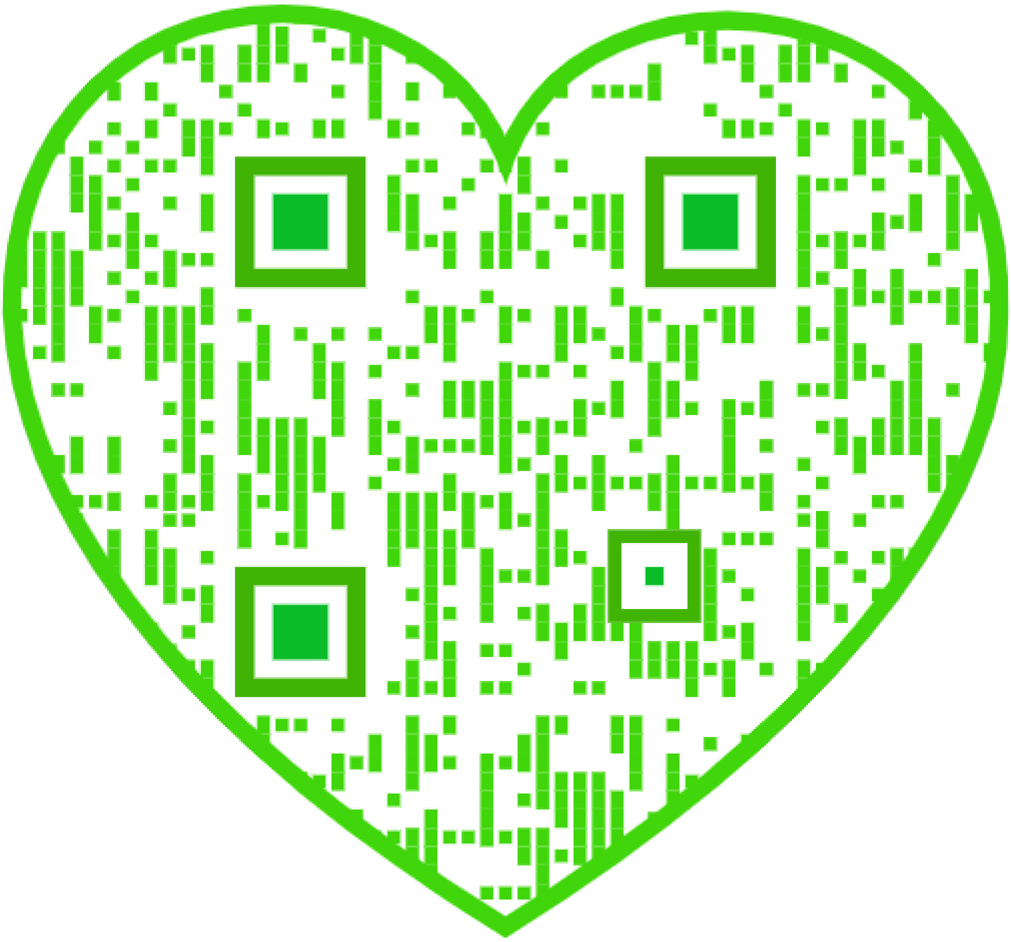

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Great Airports of the World travels the globe to investigate which airports can be deemed great and why they receive such an accolade. The selection of airports is diverse, from the challenging Lukla airport in Nepal to Singapore's Changi, which has long been known for fantastic terminal facilities.

While airport security protocols can often be at odds with the enthusiast wanting to follow their interests, we highlight some exceptions, such as the UK's third largest airport, Manchester and Germany's busiest, Frankfurt.

Airports don't become great without planning, and this publication looks at organisations that makes an airport stand out.

This 116-page special also provides spotting guides for several popular major airports and looks at major worldwide projects underway that may lead to a new generation of great airports.

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326/25

Welcome

Hello and welcome to the April issue of *Airliner World*, incorporating *Airports of the World*.

As I write this, the UK's largest airport, London Heathrow – handling more than 1,300 aircraft movements daily – is eerily silent. Not a single aircraft has taken off or landed so far today. March 21, 2025, will undoubtedly be remembered as one of the most disrupted days in Heathrow's history. A fire at a local electrical substation supplying the airport triggered a "significant power outage", bringing operations at the airport to a complete standstill. In an almost unprecedented move, the airport operator promptly announced a full-day closure.

Disruption at Heathrow is nothing new – the hub certainly experiences its fair share of operational challenges – but these typically affect specific airlines rather than the entire airport. What strikes me as particularly surprising is Heathrow's decision not to operate any flights at all, opting instead for a full 24-hour shutdown. The airport stated this was necessary to "maintain the safety of our passengers and colleagues."

As with the NATS meltdown in 2023, when a flight planning system failure at the UK's air traffic control provider caused widespread disruption, serious questions will undoubtedly be raised about Heathrow's handling of the incident. I expect it won't be long before airport executives are called before MPs in Parliament to explain what happened.

According to aviation analytics firm Cirium, Heathrow had been scheduled to see 665 departures and 669 arrivals today, equating to 145,094 and 145,836 seats, respectively. In total, more than 1,330 flights carrying nearly 291,000 passengers were set to pass through the airport. British Airways, Heathrow's largest operator, accounts for 51% of its flights, followed by Virgin Atlantic and Lufthansa.

The disruption isn't just limited to today – the ripple effect will likely be felt for days. With aircraft, crew and passengers all out of position, operational challenges are bound to linger long after power is restored and flights resume.

Shifting our focus closer to home, I'm pleased to introduce this month's issue as a US special, headlined by Delta Air Lines. In March, Delta celebrated its centenary, joining an exclusive club of airlines to have reached this milestone. We take a deep dive into America's oldest carrier, tracing its journey from a humble crop-dusting service to the global powerhouse it is today. Continuing the US theme, we bring you the first instalment in a two-part series on Braniff's Concorde operation, with part two appearing in our June issue.

Elsewhere, it was a pleasure to attend the Gatwick Aviation Enthusiasts Fair on March 9. A big thank you to everyone who stopped by for a chat – it was great to hear what you love about the magazine and, just as importantly, where you think we can improve. If you have any feedback, do get in touch (details can be found on page 82).

Wherever you are in the world, I hope you enjoy this issue.

Thomas

Thomas Haynes
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Behind the scenes at BermudAir

COVER: *Delta celebrated its centenary by dressing Airbus A350-941, N527DN (c/n 720), in a special livery* VIIMAGES.COM/CLÉMENT ALLOING

BELOW: *An aerial photo taken on March 21, 2025 shows aircraft parked on the tarmac at Heathrow following its closure after a fire broke out at a substation supplying electricity to the airport* STR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

FEATURES

22 **Lufthansa's luxury heavyweight**

Andreas Spaeth investigates Lufthansa's new benchmark-setting Allegris cabins

30 **Finnair's Embraer refresh**

As Finnair continues the cabin upgrade of its Embraer E190 fleet, *Airliner World* is invited for a behind-the-scenes look at proceedings

34 **Arctic ambitions**

Edward Paine reports on Greenland's new airports and extended runway capacity, and Air Greenland's renewed optimism about its future

40 **Middle East's megalithic MROs**

Ian Harbison details the ambitious five-year expansion plans of Etihad Engineering and Joramco, two of the leading independent MRO providers in the Middle East

44 **Under African skies**

Andreas Rohde flies to the far south of the African continent to travel back in time for a thrilling ride aboard a Beechcraft Model 18

52 **Concorde in colour**

In the first of an exclusive two-part special, Chris Sloan appraises the often-overlooked story of Concorde's operation with US carrier Braniff International Airways

60 **Saint Helena's airlink**

Matteo Legnani flies west from South Africa on an E190, to visit the remote island territory of Saint Helena and learn more about its unique airport

66 **Island vibes with BermudAir**

Chris Sloan is charmed by Bermuda's first commercial airline, which operates to North America and plans to extend further afield

90 **One hundred not out**

From its crop-dusting origins to one of the world's largest airlines, Thomas Haynes details the highs and lows of Delta Air Lines as it celebrates its centenary

this month

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See page 74 for details

90

DELTA AIR LINES

REGULARS

06 News review
Our comprehensive global news round-up

21 Sky View
Insights and opinion on the industry's hottest topics

76 Deliveries
The latest commercial acquisitions

80 MRO News
Maintenance, repair and overhaul insights and announcements

82 Departure Gate
Readers' comments and lighter stories

84 UK Visitors
Rarities spotted on UK runways

86 Aviation Training
A round-up of recent developments

88 Air Safety
Incidents and accident reports

Swiss debut for **A350**

LEISURE AIRLINE Edelweiss Air has marked a major milestone in Swiss aviation by taking delivery of its first Airbus A350-900. The widebody aircraft, registered HB-IHF (c/n 363), landed at Zurich Airport on March 13 after arriving from Tarbes/Lourdes in France. This is the first A350 to carry a Swiss registration, beating sister carrier SWISS, which is still awaiting its own inaugural A350 delivery.

The five-year-old airframe was originally flown by LATAM Airlines Brasil between December 2019 and January 2021. The jet was then stored at Victorville in Southern California until October 2023. Lufthansa Group acquired the airframe and during 2024 it spent time in Shannon in Ireland, Teruel in France and Hanoi in Vietnam being prepared for entry into service.

Edelweiss put on a show for the hundreds of spectators who turned out to watch the aircraft's arrival. During its initial approach to Zurich, the widebody performed a pre-planned go-around manoeuvre and made a celebratory lap of the airport before finally touching down on runway 16 at just after 1500hrs local time.

The aircraft taxied down the runway accompanied by follow-me vehicles and was greeted with a water cannon salute from the airport's fire service. It then headed for its parking position where more than 100 employees of the Edelweiss management team were already waiting to give a fitting welcome to the newest member of the fleet and its flight crew a warm welcome.

Edelweiss plans to acquire a total of six A350-900s to replace its five existing A340-300s by mid-2027. (Photo Edelweiss Air)

Norwegian buys 737s

LOW-COST CARRIER Norwegian has announced an agreement to buy ten Boeing 737-800s that are currently part of its leased fleet. According to the airline, the deal represents a "key step in securing Norwegian's future fleet."

The airline's CEO, Geir Karlsen, commented: "The overall terms achieved are attractive for Norwegian, and the transaction fits well with our long-term fleet and ownership strategy. The aircraft being acquired are an integral part of Norwegian's existing fleet and will through this deal continue to operate across our attractive and growing route network. This move is expected to deliver both short- and long-term cost savings, as well as provide additional flexibility for future fleet planning."

The transaction will initially be funded through the airline's cash reserves and is expected to close in the first quarter of 2025. Norwegian is in the process of securing long-term financing after completion through a combination of financing arrangements.

On completion of the transaction, the carrier expects to record a non-recurring gain of approximately £3.6m. This gain reflects the pricing the company has been able to achieve for the aircraft and the corresponding reduction of existing lease liabilities. Additionally, the transaction is expected to generate recurring cost savings net of financing costs of an average of approximately £14.6m per year.

Additional A321neos for **Aegean**

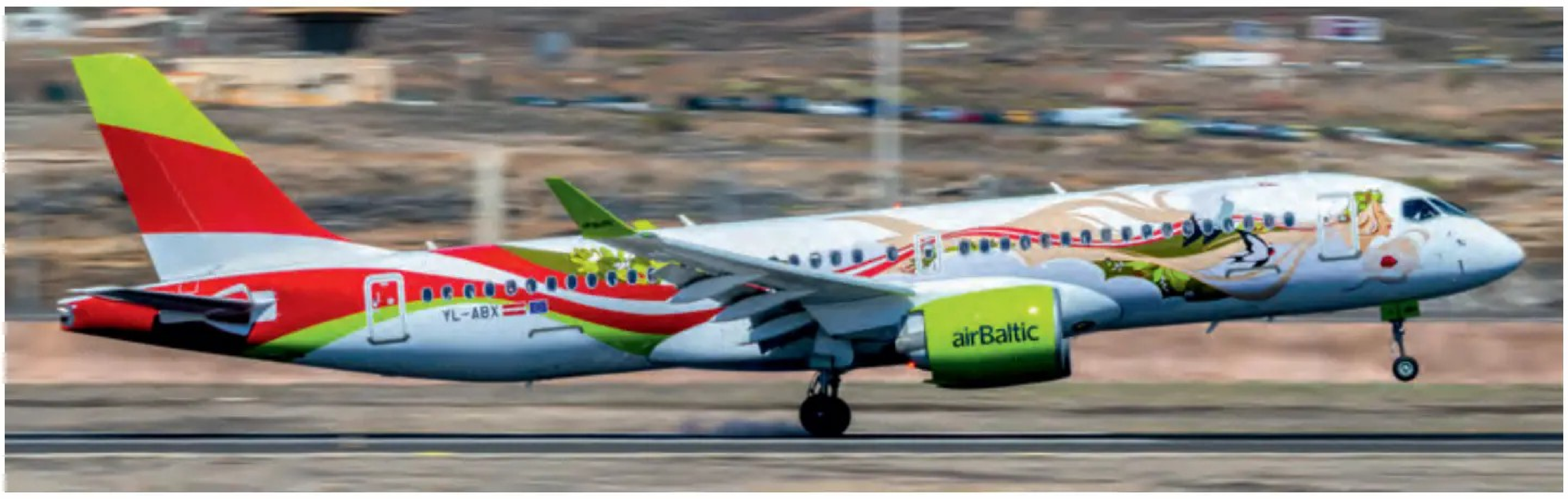
GREECE'S FLAG carrier Aegean Airlines has disclosed an order with Airbus for an extra eight A321neos. The jets will enable the Athens-based operator to further grow its network and support its expansion plans. With this latest commitment, its total direct order book with Airbus stands at 60 A320neos, with 37 already delivered.

Dimitris Gerogiannis, Aegean's CEO, commented: "The expansion of our investment plan with the additional order of eight Airbus A321neo aircraft is essential for achieving our growth objectives and further enhancing the competitiveness of our operations. It is also clear that we have a strong preference for the larger-capacity and extended-range version offered by the A321neo, which will soon represent two-thirds of our Airbus fleet."

Benoit de Saint-Exupéry, Airbus EVP for sales of commercial aircraft, said: "We are delighted that Aegean has once again chosen the fuel-efficient A321neo. This decision underscores [its] commitment to operational excellence and enhancing the passenger experience. We value our collaboration with the largest Greek airline and look forward to continuing our partnership, supporting their growth plans within Europe and beyond."

To date, more than 6,800 A321neos have been ordered by over 85 customers across the globe. (Photo Airbus)

Green goes red



LATVIAN FLAG carrier airBaltic has blamed external factors for a €118m loss posted during 2024. The result came despite it being a record year for passenger numbers and revenue which saw the company exceed eight million passengers for the first time and record its highest-ever annual revenue of nearly €748m.

Martin Gauss, president and CEO of airBaltic, said: "[Last year] was a year of both growth and external challenges. We set new records in passenger numbers and revenue, with scheduled flights busier than ever. Demand reached new heights, setting fresh benchmarks in our history. However, industry-wide engine maintenance issues and currency fluctuations impacted the financial performance. Nonetheless, these are temporary setbacks that do not change our long-term trajectory."

As reasons for its loss, the firm cited accelerated depreciation of the Pratt & Whitney engines powering its A220 fleet, which amounted to €73m, alongside currency-related adjustments including Euro depreciation against the US Dollar in 2024 and the servicing of the airline's expanded bond programme.

AirBaltic's total passenger count for 2024 rose 18% from the previous year, while the total number of flights, including ACMI operations, reached a new record, surpassing 73,000 – an increase of 12% compared to 2023.

Meanwhile, airBaltic's own scheduled flights totalled 47,000, reflecting a steady 7% year-on-year climb in operational activity. The airline's load factor on scheduled flights rose by 4.5% year-over-year, reaching approximately 81% in 2024, up from about 77% in 2023.

The carrier grew its all-A220 fleet by three airframes during the year, while also placing an order with Airbus for an additional ten examples. In a significant fleet milestone, this February, it took delivery of its 50th A220. YL-ABX (c/n 55329) arrived on February 11 in a special 'Baltic heritage' livery. The jet entered service on February 16. (Photo AirTeamImages.com/ Moises Mendoza)

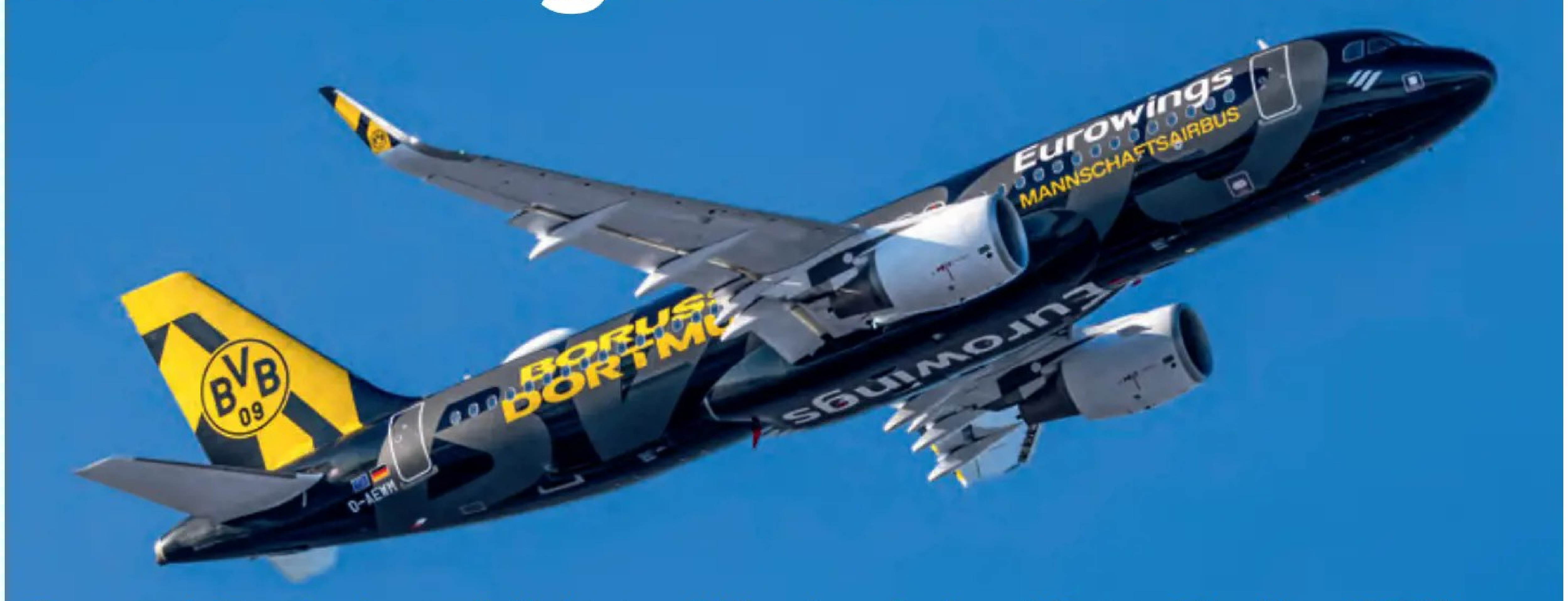
Norse hands back **Boeings**

LOW-COST LONG-HAUL airline Norse Atlantic Airways has handed back the three Boeing 787-8 Dreamliners it was subleasing to Air Europa to lessor AerCap. The ex-Norwegian Long Haul aircraft – EC-NZG (c/n 35310), EC-NXA (c/n 35314) and EC-NVZ (c/n 35313) – were initially delivered to Norse in 2022 and since then have been on continuous sublease on a dry lease basis to the Spanish carrier. Prior to redelivery back to AerCap, the three 787-8s had approximately four years left on their leases.

Following the transaction, Norse Atlantic has a uniform fleet of 12 787-9s, with remaining lease lengths ranging between seven and 14 years. The transaction will result in a significant accounting gain which will be recognised in the first quarter 2025 results.

While Zulu Golf appears to still be operating for Air Europa, according to flight tracking data, the other two 787s were thought to be in maintenance at the time of writing. All three are configured with 291 seats in a single-class layout and are powered by two Rolls-Royce Trent 1000 engines.

Eurowings' football focus



German carrier Eurowings has unveiled its latest special-livery honouring Borussia Dortmund. The Airbus A320-214, D-AEWM (c/n 7259), has been painted in a black and yellow design to match the football club's colours. The lettering 'Mannschaftsairbus' below the Eurowings logo on the forward fuselage translates as 'Team Airbus'. The aircraft previously wore a similar scheme from April 2022 dubbed 'Fanairbus' AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/KAI MARCEL SCHOLZ

in brief

UK ACMI operator **Ascend Airways** has dispensed with one of its three aircraft just five weeks after taking delivery of it. The seven-year-old Boeing 737 MAX 8, G-HAGI (c/n 42828), was acquired by the carrier on December 23, 2024, and entered service on January 13, 2025, flying on behalf of Oman Air based in Muscat until January 30. The jet was then flown to Prague/Vaclav Havel on February 6 and has since been re-registered LZ-DDB. The airline's fleet now comprises a single 737-800 and 737 MAX 8.

Italian airline **SkyAlps** was forced to temporarily ground seven aircraft at the beginning of March, leaving a sole remaining airworthy example, after the country's aviation regulator found deficiencies in aircraft maintenance attestations following an audit. ENAC said the maintenance certifications for SkyAlps' fleet of De Havilland Canada Dash 8-400s were provided by a company technician who has subsequently been banned from accessing all airports where the airline operates. The company is working through corrective actions to get the fleet back in the air.

Maersk Air Cargo UK was awarded its air operator certificate by Britain's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on February 14 and is due to begin commercial operations using Boeing 767-200BDSFs sourced from its Danish parent company Maersk Air Cargo. G-MACY (c/n 24457) and G-MACZ (c/n 27195) were delivered on February 26 and January 15, respectively. The airline is the only UK carrier to operate the 767.

The first-ever **Airbus** A380 returned to the skies for the first in nearly three years on March 14. The manufacturer's own A380-841, F-WWOW (c/n 001), took off from Toulouse/Blagnac to begin a series of test flights aimed at certifying improvements to be rolled out on the in-service fleet. The Rolls-Royce Trent 970-powered aircraft first flew on April 27, 2005.

After transitioning to an all-Airbus A220 fleet in December 2024, Romanian airline **Animawings** has returned to A320 operations following the delivery of an ex-Kuwait Airways A320-214 on March 6. The ten-year-old jet, YR-AGD (c/n 6350), is expected to be joined by another A320 soon.

Air France-KLM has adjusted its order for new Airbus A350F freighters and will now take six instead of the previously planned eight, according to *ch-aviation*. It's reported that **Air France** and **Martinair** will each take three. The news comes after **KLM** reported a 3.9% decline in revenue in 2024 for its freight business compared to 2023.

KLM reports “disappointing” results

DUTCH FLAG carrier KLM’s operating profit for 2024 fell by €234m to €416m despite a revenue growth for the year of 5.4%. Rising costs of equipment, personnel and airport fees put profitability under pressure, the airline said.

Marjan Rintel, KLM CEO, commented: “Our results for 2024 show two different sides. On [the] one hand, we are still not operating at 100% of our flight capacity and costs continue to rise sharply. As a result, we run the risk of not earning enough to keep investing in our future, although I’m confident that our plans will help us to improve our operations and finances for the long term. At the same time, 2024 also brought some good news and progress. We saw growing customer demand for flight tickets, achieved operational improvements, welcomed the first Airbus A321neo and successfully completed the conversion of our Premium Comfort Class – our highest-rated class.”

In October last year, KLM announced a series of measures including strengthening its engineering units, simplifying its organisation, improving staff productivity by at least 5% and increasing revenues by introducing new products and services. KLM aims to save €450m this year and achieve an 8% profit margin in the period between 2026 and 2028, enabling the execution of its fleet renewal plan and future strategy.

Bas Brouns, CFO at KLM, said: “Our financial performance for 2024 is disappointing, especially considering that the operating result largely consists of cost savings. We need to strengthen our financial position in order to be able to make vital investments in the coming years. The measures we announced are beginning to pay off. That said, a 3.3% margin is not enough to finance new aircraft. Therefore, this year, strengthening our financial position remains our priority.”

The cost savings initiated in 2024 will continue into 2025. To increase the earning capacity of the fleet, the newest Embraers will get four extra seats and the cabin layout of the Boeing 777-200 will be adjusted. Additionally, KLM has begun to test a new catering proposition on European flights, offering passengers more choice and paid options. (Photo KLM)

Air Greenland adds A320neo

AIR GREENLAND has signed an agreement with leasing company Carlyle Aviation Partners to lease an Airbus A320neo, which is scheduled to join its fleet in time for the 2027 summer season. The agreement runs for six years with an option to extend and gives Air Greenland the flexibility to operate the new route between Ilulissat and Copenhagen in Denmark, while further complementing its A330neo.

The aircraft will be delivered in December 2026 and will then be adapted to Greenlandic conditions, although the airline did not specify what this involved. It is expected to enter service in spring 2027, just in time for the first peak season at North Greenland’s new international airport, which is expected to open in late 2026 with a 2,200m runway. The A320neo will support the increased capacity made possible by the new facility.

CEO Jacob Nitter Sørensen, said: “The delivery time for new Airbus aircraft is currently six to seven years, so we have chosen to lease the aircraft to be ready when the new international airport in Ilulissat opens and to gain financial flexibility as the route is still new.”

The jet will be maintained in Copenhagen by SAS, which already looks after the carrier’s sole A330-800. It will be flown by Air Greenland’s A330neo pilots, who will receive a dual type rating for both aircraft, supplemented by retrained Dash 8 pilots.

Loganair launches new base

SCOTTISH REGIONAL airline Loganair is set to open its tenth base at Southampton Airport later this year. The Glasgow-based carrier will position two ATR 72-600 aircraft at the gateway beginning in October, increasing its annual seat offering by more than 140,000 in the process.

From October 26, a new route between Southampton and Manchester will be launched, timed to meet onward connections to Inverness, Aberdeen and the Isle of Man. From that date, capacity on the airline’s popular Edinburgh connection will be increased as it swaps to the ATR turboprop from the current Embraer ERJ145s.

Loganair CEO Luke Farajallah said the new base was “a logical and important strategic step” for the airline and that he felt “confident the local market will respond well to our more permanent presence and new routes through the basing of two aircraft later this year.”

According to Kam Jandu, chief executive of AGS Airports, the gateway’s operator, Manchester was the most sought-after route by businesses across the region and was previously used by more than 200,000 passengers per year: “The reintroduction of this route will further strengthen the economic ties between the two cities, and Loganair’s extensive airline interline agreements will open wider global connection opportunities for our passengers, making the world even more accessible from their local airport.”

Loganair’s nine other bases are at Kirkwall, Inverness, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, City of Derry, Newcastle and the Isle of Man.

Wizz Air awaits maiden XLR

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XLR
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As Airliner World *went to press, low-cost carrier Wizz Air was awaiting the imminent delivery of its first Airbus A321XLR. The long-range narrowbody, which is expected to be registered G-XLRA (c/n 11631), flew for the first time on March 18 on a flight lasting just over three hours. The jet is bound for Wizz Air UK, where it was expected to enter service on the new London/Gatwick-Jeddah route* DIRK GROTHE

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Air Astana's future focus

BUOYED BY healthy financial results for Q4 2024, the Air Astana Group has announced its fleet plans up to the end of the decade. The group, which covers the Kazakh flag carrier and its low-cost subsidiary FlyArystan, boasted total 2024 annual revenue and other income of $1.3bn, excluding non-recurring items, an increase of 12.4% compared to 2023. The two airlines also carried some nine million passengers during the period, an increase of almost one million compared to the previous year.

Looking ahead, the group plans to expand its fleet to 63 aircraft by the end of this year and 84 by the end of 2029. In 2024, Air Astana and FlyArystan both took delivery of five aircraft, ending the year with 34 and 23 aircraft in their fleets, respectively. The company said that it returned three Embraer E190-E2 jets ahead of schedule as part of its fleet-simplification strategy, under which the airline will focus on an all-Airbus roster. All Embraer pilots have been converted to the Airbus fleet.

The group's CEO, Peter Foster, said the company had been proactively managing the line-up while adding capacity per the planned growth strategy. This included the Pratt & Whitney mitigation plan, with action taken to rest engines in the low season, which allowed for 93 powerplant replacements last year. Additional aircraft and spare engine capacity were also secured, including 13 spare engines for its A320/21neos.

Meanwhile, the installation of auxiliary fuel tanks on the airline's A321LR fleet, which was carried out at the carrier's technical facilities, has helped widen the group's network. Non-stop Almaty-London, Almaty-Guangzhou, Astana-Phu Quoc and Astana-Phuket flights have already been launched, and next year the carrier plans to commence flights between Almaty and Tokyo.

Indeed, 21 new routes were added during 2024, 14 of which were launched in Q4. Foster said: "In 2025, we have already announced another eight new routes in key growth markets, including direct flights from Almaty to Frankfurt, Guangzhou, Mumbai and Da Nang and Nha Trang in Vietnam." (Photo Air Astana)

Russian-powered Superjet takes flight

A RUSSIAN-POWERED Yakovlev Superjet 100 conducted its maiden flight on March 17. Test pilots Dmitry Aleksandrovich Demenev, Igor Yuryevich Grevtsev and flight operator Maxim Grigoryevich Grukanov were at the controls. Flight testing will allow the rest of Russia's existing Superjet fleet to be retrofitted with the domestically-built Aviadvigatel PD-8 engine, developed by the United Engine Corporation (UEC).

The 2018-built aircraft, 97012 (c/n 95157), took off from the Komsomolsk-on-Amur facility and flew for around 40 minutes. During the flight, the aircraft reached speeds of around 310mph and an altitude of 9,800ft. According to an official statement by Rostec, after landing, the crew reported that "the flight mission had been completed in full. The powerplant with PD-8 engines demonstrated stable operation and the gas-dynamic stability of the engines was assessed in flight in constant and variable modes."

Speaking after the test flight, Sergey Chemezov, CEO of Rostec State Corporation, said: "After 2022, the Superjet was essentially reassembled from scratch. At the same time, the engine is one of the key elements of the important substitution programme – it is the heart of the aircraft. There is still a lot of work and many flights ahead. In April, another fully Russian aircraft with PD-8 engines will join the certification flight tests."

By the end of March, United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) intends to transfer two more experimental PD-8 engines for flight tests. Certification is expected later this year. Rostec said that around 40 imported systems and components, including the avionics, auxiliary power unit, air conditioning, landing gear, integrated control system, power supply system, fire protection systems and powerplants are being replaced with domestically-produced products. (Photo UAC)

Life begins at 60 for An-26

DESPITE BEING introduced into service in the 1970s, Russian authorities are looking to extend the life of the Antonov An-26 by another ten years, increasing the type's service life before its next major overhaul from 20,000 flight hours to 26,000 and keeping many examples flying for more than 60 years.

Russian news agency Interfax has reported that the country's civil aviation research institute GosNIIAS, a subsidiary of the Russian federal air transport agency Rosaviatsia, has been awarded the contract worth over £64,000. The extension covers around 100 airframes with an average age of 50 years. It is looking to complete the work by the end of January 2028.

Powered by a pair of Ivchenko AI-24 engines, the type remains in service with several Russian airlines, including Angara, IrAero and Polar Airlines. The carriers warned that most of the fleet would stop flying in less than five years and, as there was no replacement for this or the An-24, they requested a life extension for their airframes.

A replacement could come in the form of the 44-seat UZGA TVRS-44 Ladoga and the 68-seat Ilyushin Il-114-300. However, testing and certification of both twin turboprops is running massively behind schedule. Deliveries of the latter were due to begin in 2024, but have now been pushed back to 2026 at the earliest. UAC plans to have 51 Il-114-300s built and in service by 2030. The Ladoga, meanwhile, has been delayed until 2028. According to manufacturer UZGA, the fuselage of the first four prototypes is being built, with around 90% completed. It plans to have a total of 105 units built by the end of the decade.
(Photo Key Collection)

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Emirates expands A350 destinations

WITH THREE Airbus A350s now in operation and more due to arrive this year, Emirates has revealed the next seven cities to be served by the type. Beginning on June 1, the widebody will operate six times weekly to Tunis (Tunisia) and daily to Amman (Jordan). On the first of the following month, the airline will begin daily A350 services to Dammam (Saudi Arabia) and Istanbul (Turkey).

Launching the type's first foray into Southeast Asia with Emirates, daily Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam) flights will begin on August 1, followed two days later by three times weekly links to Baghdad (Iraq). Rounding out the latest seven additions, Oslo (Norway) will join the list of Emirates A350 destinations from September 1 when its daily flight receives the upgrade.

In addition to the newly added cities, Emirates will layer on more A350 services to Bahrain and Kuwait. The former will become a nearly all-A350 operation with the addition of the third daily flight from June 1. The latter will be served by a second A350 flight on one of its daily flights from October 1.

Adnan Kazim, Emirates' deputy president and chief commercial officer, said: "Our strategic A350 expansion across diverse geographies in the Middle East, Europe, Africa and Southeast Asia leverages the aircraft's operational flexibility and efficiency, while offering more customers expanded premium travel options and the opportunity to experience our latest generation interiors for Business Class and Premium Economy along with plenty of thoughtful touches throughout every cabin." (Photo Emirates)

Emirates
الإمارات

Ethiopian buys BBJ

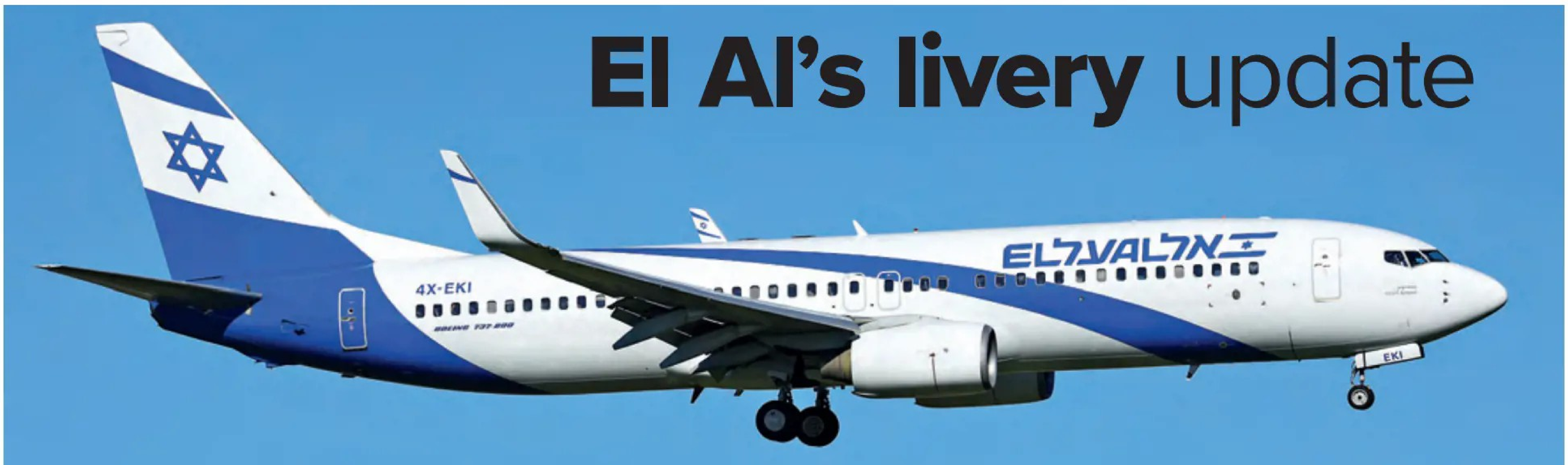
FLAG CARRIER Ethiopian Airlines inducted its first VIP-configured aircraft in the form of a Boeing BBJ2 on March 15, in a move the airline said will help it attract custom from "corporate leaders, diplomats and private travellers."

The American-built twinjet, ET-BBH (c/n 37663), first flew in August 2009 and was registered to German carrier ACM Air Charter as D-AACM between December 2010 and March 2018, after which it was acquired by a private operator and transferred to the San Marino register as T7-GSA. The CFM International CFM56-powered jet was withdrawn from use in December last year and stored at Singapore/Seletar until its delivery flight to Addis Ababa/Bole via Dubai/World Central.

Commenting on the aircraft's arrival, Mesfin Tasew, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO, said: "As Africa's leading carrier, we are always looking for ways to enhance our offerings and meet the unique demands of our diverse clientele. With the addition of this business jet, we are elevating our charter service to new heights, ensuring that our customers enjoy unparalleled luxury, convenience and world-class service. This is yet another step in our commitment to fostering business and investment opportunities across Africa and beyond."

According to Ethiopian, the aircraft is configured with 19 seats for commercial operation and 32 for private flights. Passengers can also enjoy "state-of-the-art in-flight amenities, including an advanced entertainment system displaying on up to 42in monitors, Wi-Fi connectivity and premium onboard dining tailored to their preferences".

El Al's livery update



Tel Aviv/Ben Gurion-based El Al Israel Airlines has subtly updated its livery, with the first aircraft to wear the new scheme being Boeing 737-8N, 4X-EKI (c/n 28587). The latest design features more blue on the tail with enlarged all-blue titles at the front of the fuselage. The update comes after the airline's leisure subsidiary Sundor updated its livery earlier this year V1IMAGES.COM/ROBERT EIKELENBOOM

Iraqi 777 bows out

IRAQI AIRWAYS' sole Boeing 777 has been withdrawn from use. The 777-29MLR, YI-AQZ (c/n 40993), was delivered on December 12, 2012, direct from Boeing. According to flight tracking data, its final commercial flight was between Kuala Lumpur and Baghdad on March 8, 2025.

The widebody, which is powered by two General Electric GE90s, was configured to seat 364 passengers in a two-class configuration, comprising 14 business class and 350 economy seats.

On March 11, Quebec Zulu was flown to Tucson in the US from Baghdad on a flight which took just over 15-and-a-half hours. The following day, it made the short half-an-hour hop to Marana/Pinal Airpark. Notably, on the ferry flight to the US, while flying over Colorado and Arizona, the aircraft step-climbed up to 43,000ft, which is just 100ft short of the type's service ceiling of 43,100ft.

It's not known what fate awaits the 777, although its presence has been removed from the flag carrier's website. As the widebodied jet is only 13 years old, a career with another carrier could be possible. Reports suggest its C-check was completed in 2019.

Flydubai's record-breaking results

DUBAI-BASED LOW-COST carrier flydubai achieved the best-ever annual results in its 15-year history in 2024, reporting a pre-tax profit of £530m for the year ending December 31 – a 16% rise compared to 2023.

The airline carried 15.4 million passengers in 2024, up 11% on 2023. As a result, total revenue rose 15% to £2.7bn. Overall capacity, measured in available seat kilometres (ASKM), increased by 10%, while passenger load factor increased by 1.2%. It said the financial results were driven by increased demand for both business and leisure travel around its network.

Despite the positive results, the all-Boeing operator faced significant headwinds during 2024, stemming from delays to aircraft deliveries. According to the carrier, the four 737 MAX 8s delivered in the first half of the year were from a backlog of previous years and faced extensive delays. "[We] did not receive any of the aircraft that were contractually scheduled to be delivered in 2024 due to ongoing challenges with Boeing's delivery schedule," a statement said. As a result, flydubai was forced to extend leases on four 737-800s in order to fill gaps.

The carrier also had to re-evaluate its route development plans and implement frequency revisions across its network. Despite this, flydubai managed to grow its network in 2024 to 131 destinations in 55 countries.

Flydubai's 88-strong fleet comprises 29 737-800s, 56 737 MAX 8s, and three 737 MAX 9s. Its current orderbook stands at 127 737 MAX aircraft to be delivered over the next decade, in addition to 30 787 Dreamliners, following its first widebody order placed at the 2023 Dubai Airshow, deliveries of which are due to begin in 2027.

Airtours to **Airtour**

IRAN AIRTOUR has resumed Airbus A320 operations following the induction of a 31-year-old ex-Airtours International example. The A320-214, EP-MDS (c/n 424), has been in the country since February last year, ADS-B data suggests.

Prior to it appearing in Iran, the jet spent four years on the ground in Varna, Bulgaria. For the majority of its flying career so far – which began in 1995 – it flew for British airlines as G-CRPH. Airtours International was the first, followed by its later iterations MyTravel Airways and Thomas Cook Airlines. The latter withdrew it from use in November 2012.

A wide range of airlines subsequently operated the IAE V2500-powered jet including Aerolus Air (Gambia), Ariana Afghan Airlines, SEAir International (Philippines), Sky Prim Air (Moldova), Terra Avia (Moldova), Safi Airways (Afghanistan), Electra Airways (Bulgaria), Enter Air (Poland) and Asian Express Airline (Tajikistan).

The A320 joins a fleet which comprises four Airbus A300-600s, four A310-300s and seven McDonnell Douglas MD-80s.

AlMasria's double delivery

CAIRO-BASED ALMASRIA Universal Airlines has doubled its Airbus A321 fleet following the delivery of two aircraft. The first, A321-231, SU-TCP (c/n 1004), arrived on February 20 and is a 26-year-old former Aero Lloyd example. The second, A321-211, SU-TCN (c/n 1629), was handed over two days later and is a 23-year-old ex-LTU airframe. The former is powered by the IAE V2500 – the same engine used on AlMasria's existing Airbus fleet – while the latter is fitted with CFM International CFM56s.

SU-TCP started life in Germany with Aero Lloyd in April 1999. Between 2004 and 2013, the aircraft was used by both Onur Air and Saudi Arabian Airlines. Portuguese charter airline Hi Fly acquired it in March 2014 and put it to use with the Belgian Air Force until January 2021. Hi Fly subsequently operated it on behalf of Jet2 for the 2022 and 2023 summer seasons before withdrawing it from use in October 2024.

SU-TCN was delivered to LTU in December 2001 and flew with the German carrier until February 2008, when it was transferred to Air Berlin. Austrian airline Niki used the jet for one year beginning in February 2017, before Germania acquired it, withdrawing it from use a year later.

In addition to four A321-200s, AlMasria's fleet also comprises two A320-200s and a pair of Boeing 737-400s. The carrier currently flies from Egypt to destinations in Russia, Italy, Kuwait and Djibouti.

Avro for **Atlas**

ATLAS AIR
EP-THI

Iran's Atlas Air has acquired its first British Aerospace Avro RJ85. The quadjet, EP-THI (c/n E2312), was formerly used by Tehran-based Mahan Air between August 2020 and February 2024 and Qeshm Airlines for one year until February 2025. The VIP-configured aircraft was first delivered to Uzbekistan Airways in December 1997, which operated the jet on behalf of the country's government until 2012. Before its arrival in Iran, the RJ85 was operated by Kyrgyzstan's TezJet from August 2019 AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/SHAHRAM SHARIFI

in brief

Nairobi-based **Kenya Airways** has added a Boeing 737-800 to its fleet. The 12-year-old jet, 5Y-CYF (c/n 39604), most recently flew with Australian regional carrier Rex between December 2023 and July 2024 when it ceased 737 operations. The American-built narrowbody was first delivered to Brazilian airline GOL in August 2012 and was withdrawn from use in January 2023.

Oman Air has taken delivery of its 15th Boeing 737 MAX 8. The jet, A4O-MN (c/n 63368), arrived in Muscat on March 12 from Seattle/Boeing Field via Glasgow. The 189-seat narrowbody is the second example to be handed over to the flag carrier this year. The first, A4O-MO (c/n 63369), arrived on January 28, ending the carrier's near two-year 737 delivery hiatus. As a result of their seating configurations, the pair have been deployed on its new all-economy Oman Air Connect operation (see *Airliner World*, April 2025).

Egypt's **Red Sea Airlines** has added two Boeing 737-800s to its fleet so far this year, doubling its size. Following the January delivery of 18-year-old ex-China Southern Airlines 737-81B, SU-RSC (c/n 30708), the latest to arrive was former GOL 737-8EH, SU-RSD (c/n 39619), which touched down at the airline's Cairo hub on March 12. The airline was founded in 2021 and operates scheduled and charter flights from Egypt to Central Asia and East Europe.

Uganda Airlines is due to begin flights to London/Gatwick from Entebbe on May 18, marking the carrier's first route to Europe. The four-times-weekly link will be operated by one of the carrier's two Airbus A330-800s. Flight UR110 departs the Ugandan city at 0925hrs, arriving at the London hub nine-and-a-half hours later at 1655hrs. The return flight, UR111 leaves Gatwick at 1905hrs, arriving the following day at 0635hrs.

Ethiopian Airlines and **Etihad Airways** have signed a joint venture agreement aimed at giving each other access to their respective networks across Africa, the Middle East and Asia through codeshares. As part of the deal, both airlines are launching new flights between Abu Dhabi and Addis Ababa. Ethiopian will start services from Addis Ababa/Bole to Abu Dhabi/Zayed International on July 15, while Etihad Airways will introduce daily flights starting October 1.

Spirit soars from bankruptcy

US ULTRA-LOW-COST giant Spirit Airlines has completed its financial restructuring and emerged from Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. The airline said on March 12 that with “significantly less debt and greater financial flexibility”, it had emerged “as a stronger company better positioned for long-term success.”

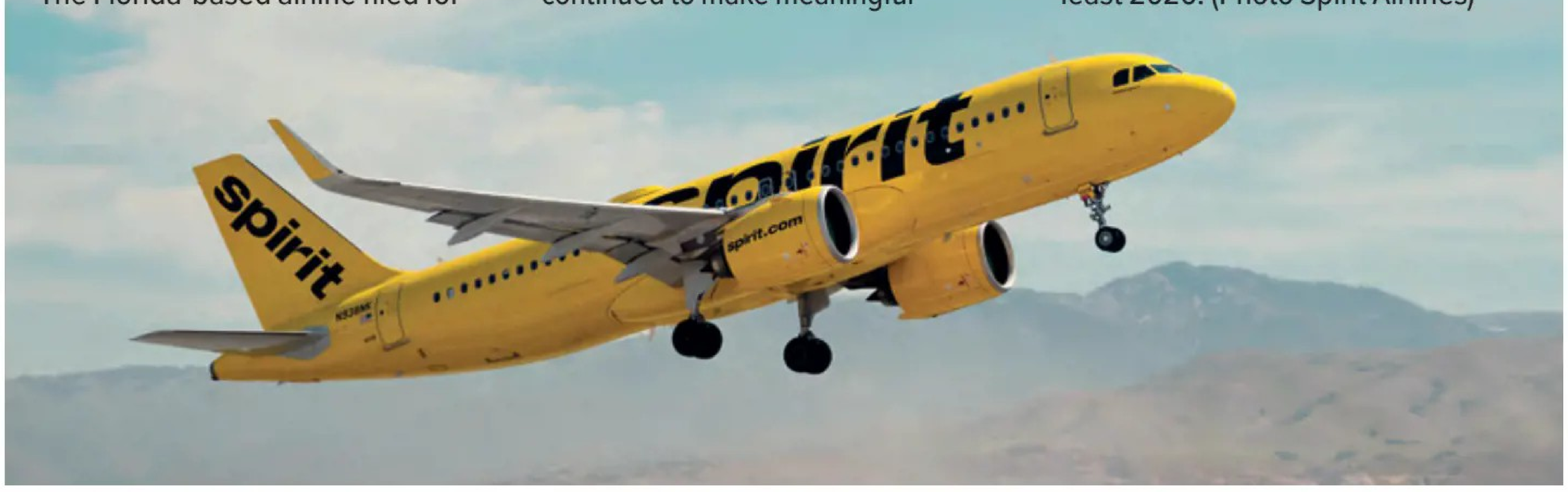
The restructuring, approved by the US Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York, will allow the ULCC to convert $795m of its debt into equity. Spirit also said it had received a $350m equity investment from existing investors for its future operations.

The Florida-based airline filed for bankruptcy protection in November 2024 after years of financial difficulties and two failed takeover attempts by JetBlue and Frontier Airlines. Spirit is now looking to move away from the ULCC model by introducing new fare bundles and axing many add-on charges.

Ted Christie, Spirit’s CEO and president, said: “We’re pleased to complete our streamlined restructuring and emerge in a stronger financial position to continue our transformation and investments in the guest experience.

“Throughout this process, we’ve continued to make meaningful progress enhancing our product offerings, while also focusing on returning to profitability and positioning our airline for long-term success. Today, we’re moving forward with our strategy to redefine low-fare travel with our new, high-value travel options.”

Spirit’s financial position has also been bolstered by a $150m compensation payout from engine maker Pratt & Whitney over the ongoing issues with its geared turbofan (GTF) powerplants on its A320neo Family fleet. Further payments are also expected as the engine issues continue until at least 2026. (Photo Spirit Airlines)



Avelo widens its reach

AVELO AIRLINES continues to grow after opening a new base at Charlotte/Concord-Padgett Regional on March 6. Initially, the airline will station a single Boeing 737 at the airport, with a second following in April, creating around 50 jobs locally. Seven destinations will be served: Albany, Manchester/Boston Regional, New Haven, Lakeland/Linder, Daytona Beach, Nashville and Rochester.

The new base becomes the airline’s second in North Carolina, joining its existing facility at Raleigh-Durham International. From April 3, a third will be added at Wilmington International Airport.

A week after its latest base opening, the Houston-based carrier announced 13 more routes, including three new destinations: New York/Islip, Grand Rapids, and Nassau, Bahamas. The latter becomes the airline’s fourth international destination and will be served twice weekly from its Raleigh-Durham base.

Consolidation for Sun Country?

SUN COUNTRY Airlines’ president and CFO has said that, under the right conditions, the airline would be open to the possibility or merging with or acquiring another airline.

Speaking at two separate conferences in as many months, Davis said that despite mergers not being in its “base plan”, he believed the airline had many aspects that would make it “fit well” with others. However, he also noted that its current “unique” business model could make it complex to others, specifically its cargo business, which, by the end of 2025, will see up to 20 Boeing 737-800BCFs operating under contract with Amazon Air.

The Alaska Air Group, which purchased Hawaiian Airlines last year, is one airline that Davis believes could be a good fit. “That said, Alaska just bought Hawaiian, and Hawaiian’s got a big Amazon deal; that’s probably the thing that comes to mind,” he commented.

Southwest’s controversial baggage shift

TEXAS-BASED SOUTHWEST Airlines has announced a major shift in its baggage policy as it begins charging some customers for checked luggage. For over 50 years, the low-cost carrier implemented its “bags fly free” policy, allowing passengers to check in two bags at no extra cost.

However, from May 28, only passengers who have the highest status with the airline’s Rapid Rewards loyalty scheme and those who pay the highest “Business Select” fare will be permitted to check in two bags. Those with the lower A-List loyalty status and those who hold a Southwest Airlines branded credit card will be allowed to check in one bag for free. All other customers will be charged. Its loyalty programme will also see changes, with more points given to customers who purchase more expensive fares and the reverse for those who purchase cheaper tickets.

In a statement, the LCC said that these “strategic moves, aimed to deepen and reward loyalty between Southwest and its most engaged customers, create new opportunities to reach consumers who value fare above everything else”.

At the same time, the airline will also introduce a new “Basic fare” on its lowest-priced tickets. This is in preparation for the introduction of charges for assigned seating and extra-legroom seats as the airline looks to “return to the levels of profitability that both we and our shareholders expect,” president and CEO Bob Jordan said in a statement.

Days after the changes were announced, rival Frontier Airlines unveiled its own baggage policy changes, offering a free checked bag on selected flights this summer. “We’ve always had heart,” said the airline’s CEO Barry Biffle. “Some airlines are walking away from what travellers love, but we’re running towards it. Think of this as the ultimate ‘divorce your old airline’ deal. If travellers show us the love, we’ll make these perks permanent.” (Photo Southwest Airlines)

7Air secures **certification**

THE FAA has certified 7Air, a new Florida-based cargo start-up, as it prepares to launch operations. The airline aims to offer ACMI, CMI, full charters, scheduled charters, and ad-hoc charters using a fleet of Boeing 737 freighters. Currently, the airline has three aircraft in its inventory: N782AC (c/n 34799), N330FL (c/n 33471), and N206AC (c/n 33597), although the latter was not due to be officially handed over to the airline until April.

"The wait is finally over," the airline said. "After countless months of hard work and dedication, 7Air has officially received FAA certification."

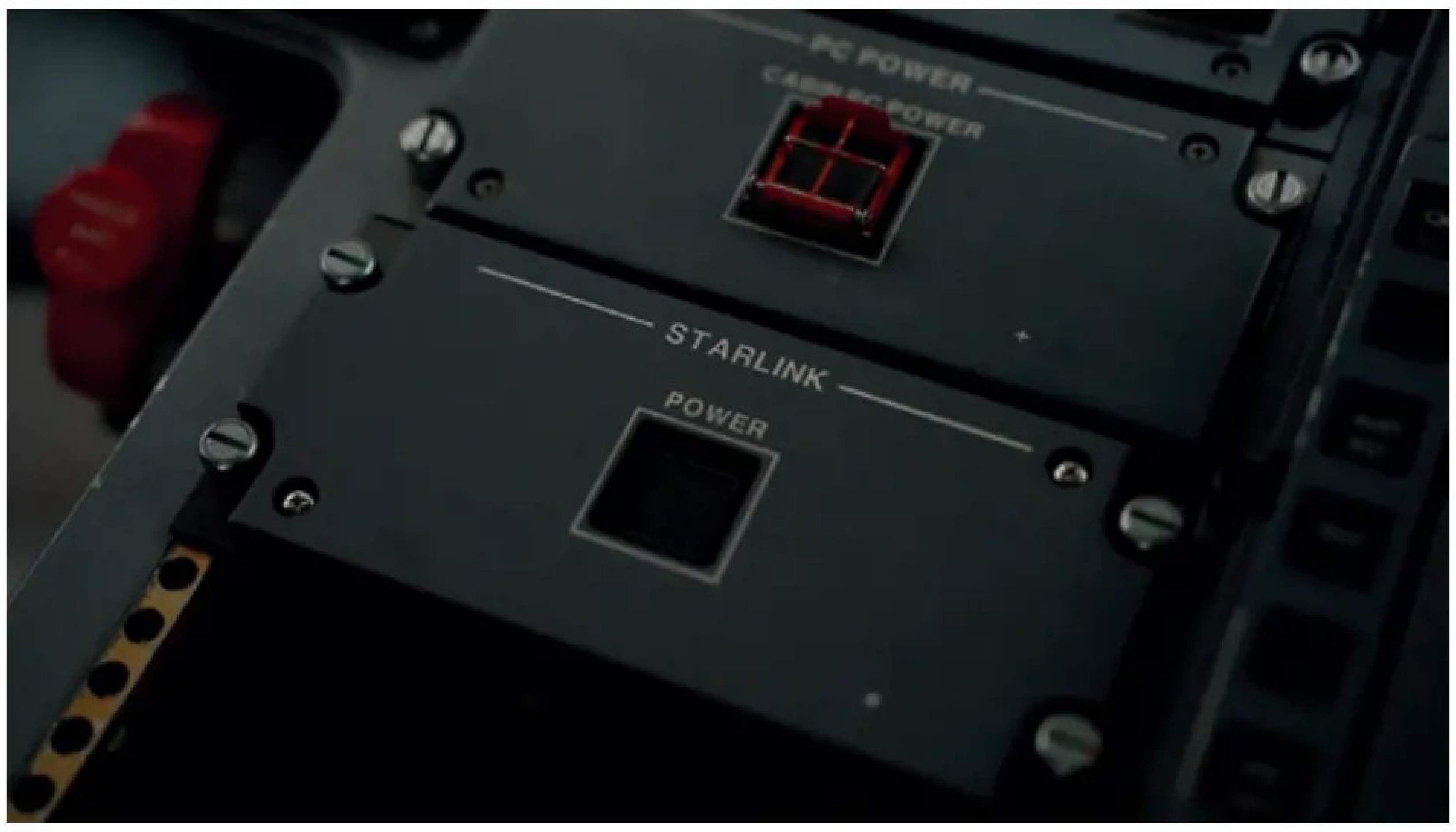
With its headquarters in Miami, the start-up performed its inaugural test flight in January between Miami and Dallas/Fort Worth, operated by N782AC. A month later, the FAA awarded 7Air its Air Operators Certificate (AOC).

It had planned to commence operations in February 2024 with services across the US, Latin America, Canada, and the Caribbean but suffered delays with the certification process.

The airline's parent is Xtreme Aviation Holding, which is co-owned by several individuals, including 7Air's CEO Amasvido Rodriguez.

Starlink-up for United

UNITED AIRLINES has linked up the first aircraft in its fleet to SpaceX's Starlink network to provide free Wi-Fi to all customers across its entire roster. United said that the aircraft in question, an Embraer E175LR, N127SY (c/n 17000441), and its other regional jets due to be fitted with the technology, will be taken out of service for around four days. This allows engineers to remove previous equipment and install the Starlink, which itself takes around eight hours.



The Chicago-based carrier said it plans to refit around 40 of its regional fleet each month from May until the end of the year, when its entire regional fleet of around 500 aircraft should be retrofitted. From here, the airline will continue to install the technology, which is around ten times faster than installing non-Starlink equipment, to the rest of its fleet.

"Our ability to roll out this innovative service with unprecedented speed and scale is a direct result of the advanced equipment, technology and team of experts at United," said United's VP of digital technology, Grant Milstead. "Starlink has been a terrific partner – our combined spirit of innovation and collaboration will enable us to hit our goal of more than 300 regional aircraft installations before the end of this year." (Photo United Airlines)

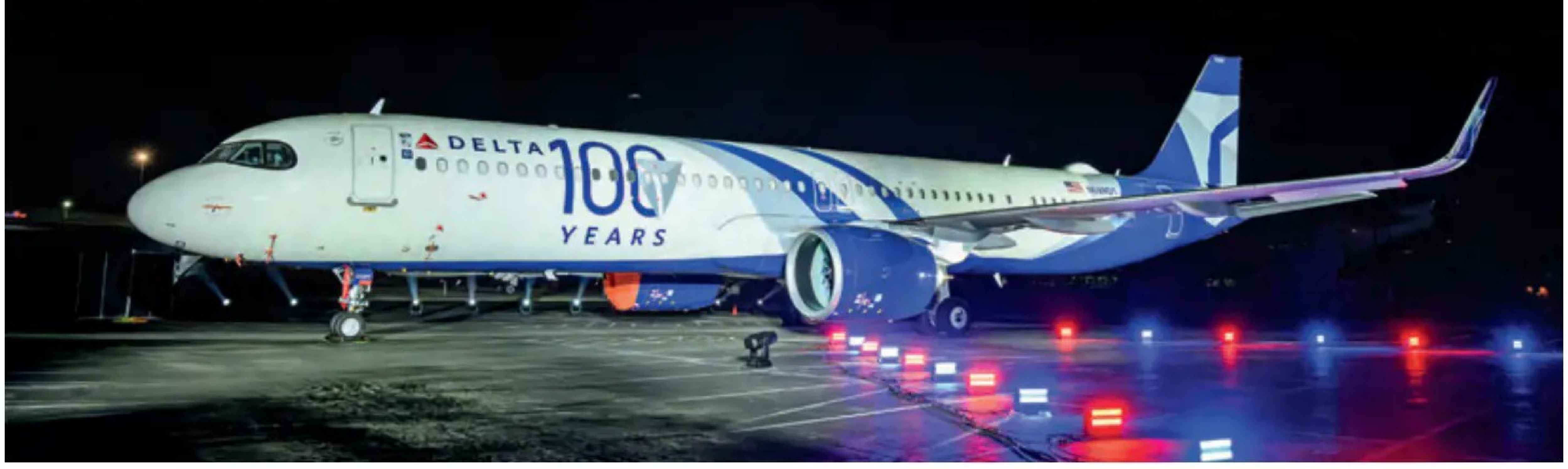
United welcomes 200th MAX

UNITED AIRLINES took delivery of its 200th Boeing 737 MAX on February 26. The CFM International LEAP-1B28-powered MAX 9, N77590 (c/n 67635), was ferried from Boeing Field to Seattle/Tacoma and was placed into service the following day to Los Angeles. Since the delivery, the airline has received a further three MAX 9s and a single MAX 8.

United is the world's largest operator of the 737 MAX 9, boasting 91 examples in its inventory, with 131 still on order. It also flies 113 MAX 8s and has eight more to be delivered. The airline also has orders for 167 of the yet-to-be-certified 737 MAX 10.

Delta unveils centenary scheme

Delta Air Lines has officially unveiled its special livery to mark the carrier's 100th anniversary. The new design, adorning Airbus A321neo, N589DT (c/n 12417), which had been delivered to the airline on February 26, was officially launched at a Centennial Gala held at the newly renovated Delta Flight Museum in Atlanta on March 15. The livery was specially designed by one of the airline's employees, Aaliyah McNeal. It features a distinctive swoosh in blue and silver tones and a large '100' emblem on the sides. Delta said the livery will also feature on a yet-to-be-delivered Airbus A350-941 aircraft later this spring. In a press release, it stated the livery honoured "a century of innovation, resilience and the people who built Delta into the airline it is today". See our Delta Air Lines centenary special from page 90 BEN ROSE PHOTOGRAPHY/DELTA AIR LINES



in brief

American Airlines has requested the US Supreme Court reverse a decision that found its Northeast Alliance with JetBlue Airways violated federal antitrust law. The alliance saw the pair partner on flights from New York and Boston, pooling their revenues and co-ordinating flight schedules. However, the court ruling led JetBlue to terminate the agreement. American has now said that the ruling would prevent future agreements from being entered.

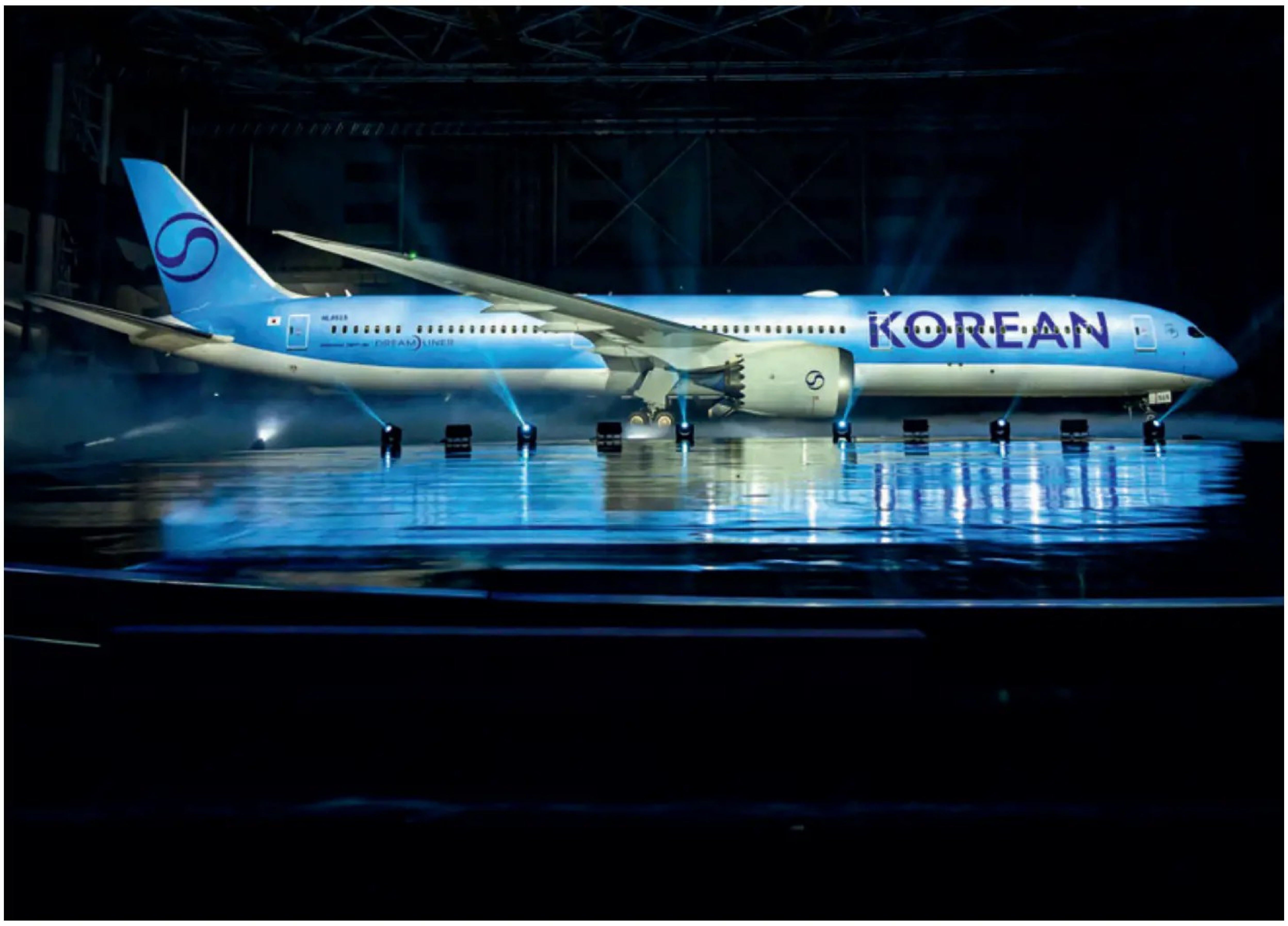
Delta Air Lines has said that it will support **JetZero's** development of a blended-wing body commercial aircraft. The US major will provide operational and cabin design input to the California-based start-up as it looks to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Z4 is envisaged to carry around 200-250 passengers over a range of 5,000nm, all while using 50% less fuel than today's jets. (Photo JetZero)

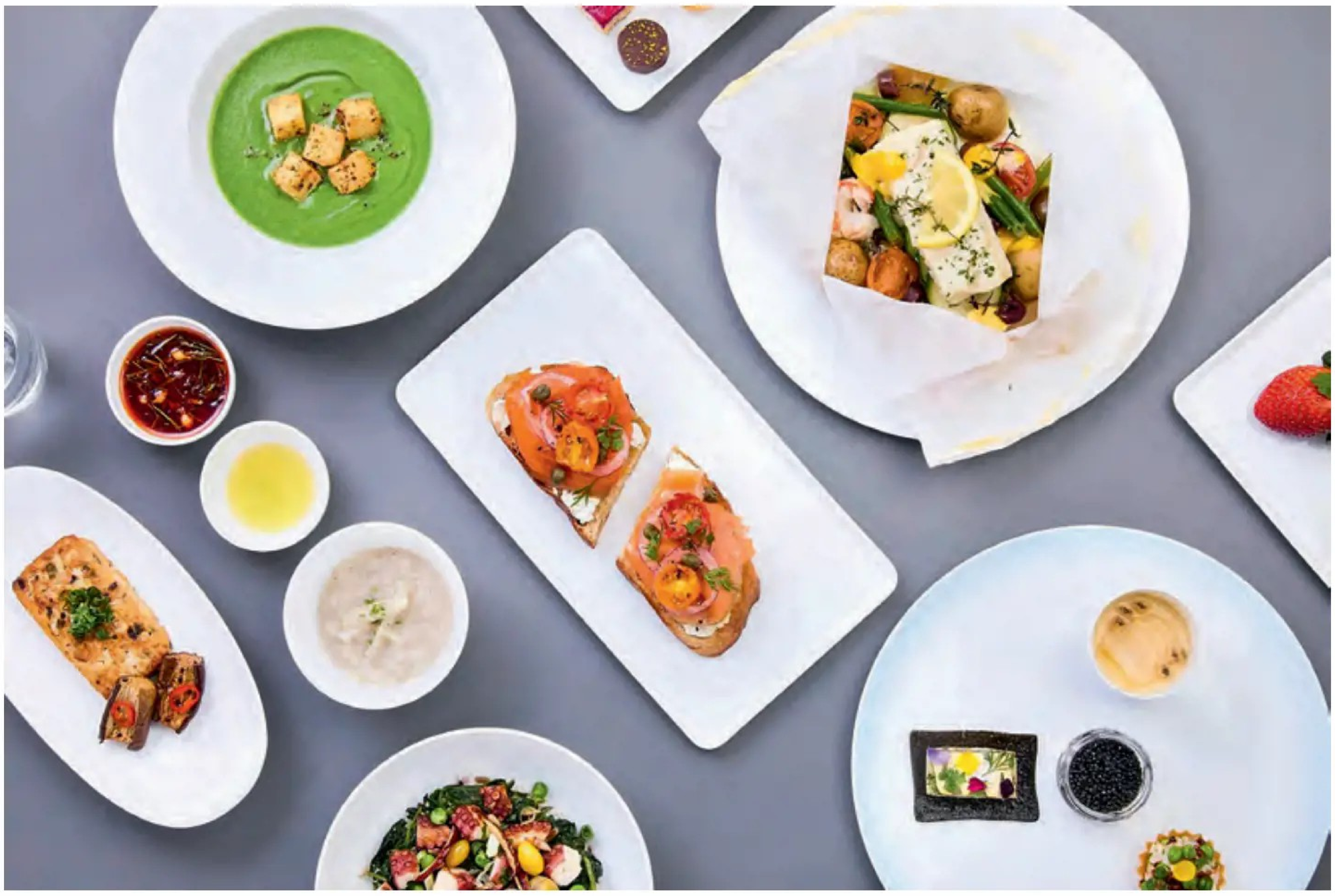
WestJet Cargo has joined forces with **Virgin Atlantic**, signing a block space agreement (BSA) with the UK carrier to manage cargo sales on the latter's new flights between London/Heathrow and Toronto/Pearson. The new year-round agreement will come into force on March 31 and will offer 20 tonnes of cargo capacity out of Toronto daily.

Hawaiian Airlines will add a fourth daily flight between Honolulu and Las Vegas/Harry Reid from October 20. The route will be operated by one of the carrier's 24-strong fleet of Airbus A330-200s, configured in a three-class layout, with 278 seats across the Main, Extra Comfort, and First Class cabins.

FedEx Express has pushed back the retirement of its McDonnell Douglas MD-11F fleet by four more years. The US cargo operator had planned to retire the currently 25-strong fleet by the end of 2028, but this has now been moved to the end of 2032. Meanwhile, the carrier has also exercised options to purchase eight additional Boeing 777Fs and ten ATR 72-600Fs, with deliveries of the latter scheduled between 2027 and 2029. Three of the Boeing airframes are due for delivery next year, while the rest will arrive in 2027.

K-bop or K-flop?





IN A move that has divided opinion, Korean Air has unveiled a new corporate identity and livery, including, for the first time in more than 40 years, an update to its signature Taegeuk symbol. The update, which has been developed over three years, was revealed at a launch event at the airline's headquarters in Seoul on March 11, which also featured Boeing 787-10, HL8515 (c/n 66878), the first aircraft to wear the new scheme.

The Taegeuk symbol, first introduced in 1984, has been simplified into a monochromatic dark blue which features on the aircraft's tail. Large KOREAN titles ('Air' has been dropped) adorn the forward fuselage in a bold brushstroke-inspired font. Meanwhile, the signature sky-blue colour has been preserved, albeit with a metallic effect. The traditional cheatline has been replaced with a "smooth, flowing curve that sweeps across the fuselage".

The new corporate identity will be phased in across aircraft liveries, in-flight services, and key customer interaction points. After being the star of the show, HL8515, which also features the airline's new Prestige Suites 2.0 business class cabin, re-entered service on March 12 between Seoul/Incheon and Tokyo/Narita.

Korean Air has also unveiled an overhaul to its cabin products and in-flight service, including its first dining menu update in 15 years. A collaboration with chef Seakyeong Kim, owner of Cesta in Seoul, it features seasonal ingredients and innovative culinary techniques. Meals across all classes have been upgraded, and passengers will be able to select from a range of options.

Additional upgrades include onboard tableware, first-class bedding, and loungewear, as well as premium-class amenity kits created in collaboration with British luxury brand Graff. The upgraded dining and service levels debuted the day after the rebranding on ten long-haul routes, including New York, Paris, and London.

In another first, the airline will introduce a premium economy product in response to growing market demand. Initially, the new cabin will be retrofitted to 11 of its Boeing 777-300ERs, which will be made possible by removing the existing first-class cabin, which consists of eight suites. The first refitted aircraft is expected to enter service during the second half of 2025, and the carrier said that modifications to its fleet would continue to expand premium economy availability across more routes in 2026. Future Airbus A350s and Boeing 777-9s deliveries could include the premium economy product.

Unfortunately, delivery delays of new aircraft types, which have left Korean Air short by about 20 aircraft per manufacturer, have led to the airline announcing that it will prolong the service of its seven Airbus A380s and six Boeing 747-8s. The former was due to start leaving the fleet this year, while the 747s were set to be gone by early 2030. Walter Cho, Korean Air CEO, said these plans had been postponed indefinitely. (Photos Korean Air)

JAL adds more **MAXs**

JAPAN AIRLINES (JAL) has inked a deal for a further 17 Boeing 737 MAX 8s, following an earlier order for 21 examples in March 2023. It expects to receive its first examples next year. This new order takes the airline's total aircraft commitments to almost 90.

Along with this latest order announcement, the airline has outlined its future fleet and long-term growth plans. Its incoming Airbus A321neos, of which deliveries are due to commence in 2028, will be used to replace its ageing Boeing 767-300ERs.

Ten additional Boeing 787-9s, ordered last year, are due for delivery in 2028. Some of the -9s will be used by the flag carrier's low-cost subsidiary ZIPAIR, which currently uses the smaller -8 model.

Along with the Dreamliners, JAL's international fleet will also be bolstered by the arrival of 20 Airbus A350-900s from 2027. The airline said this was a developing market that, by fiscal year 2030, is expected to have grown around 1.5 times compared to 2023.

COMAC for Cathay?

CATHAY PACIFIC'S chief operations and service delivery officer, Alex McGowan, has praised the progress of Chinese manufacturer COMAC and expressed interest in its wide-bodied design, the C929.

McGowan was speaking at a briefing after the Cathay Pacific Group's 2024 financial results were released. The group, which consists of Cathay Pacific, HK Express, Air Hong Kong and Cathay Cargo, recorded a net profit of HKD9.89bn (£984m) for the 12 months ending December 31, 2024.

He said that following a visit to the Chinese plane maker by a senior team of Cathay Group managers led by CEO Ronald Lam, the company would be keen to see how the C929 develops, particularly the type's engine options. A decision could then be made as to whether the airliner could fit into its "future mid-sized, widebody needs". He added: "We are very pleased to share our experience and contribute to COMAC's development, and will certainly continue to build strong relationships with them through ongoing conversations and co-operation."

During the briefing, McGowan also revealed that the Hong Kong-based airline could be interested in a stretched version of the C919 narrowbody. "I think our particular route structure and market demand require a larger narrowbody, and we're interested to see if COMAC's plans, in due course, will include the introduction of a stretched variant of the C919," he explained.

The Boeing 777X programme was also discussed, with McGowan stating that they were watching developments with the aircraft's certification "with interest". The airline ordered 31 of the 777-9 in 2013, with expected deliveries between 2021 and 2024. However, this has been pushed back several times, and according to McGowan, the airline no longer expects to receive its first aircraft before 2027. The type was expected to replace its ageing 777-300ERs, but with the ongoing delays, the airline has been forced to consider other options, including flying its older models for longer or ordering additional Airbus widebodies.

Retrofitted Air India A320neo's return

AIR INDIA has welcomed back into service its first Airbus A320neo retrofitted with its new cabin product. The aircraft, VT-EXN (c/n 8486), delivered to the airline in January 2019, was also repainted in the airline's new Vista livery.

It is the first of 27 already in-service A320neos to undergo the cabin upgrade, which, for the first time, features a premium economy product. The aircraft will now be configured with eight business class seats, 24 in premium economy and 132 in economy. Fourteen newly delivered A320neos are already fitted with the new cabins.

The airline said the A320neo retrofit programme will be completed by Q3 2025, three months later than previously announced. This part of the project will see more than 3,500 brand-new economy class seats, more than 600 premium economy seats and 200 business class seats installed. (Photo Air India)

Asian carriers ban power banks

SEVERAL MAJOR Asian airlines have banned portable power bank chargers after it was revealed that such a device may have caused the fire onboard an Air Busan Airbus A321 in January. All 176 passengers were evacuated safely from the jet, which had been on the ground at Gimhae International Airport, Busan. However, the aircraft was completely destroyed.

On March 1, South Korean authorities changed the rules for using portable battery chargers. Passengers must now carry them on their person and not store them in the overhead lockers. And following Air Busan's lead, Batik Air, EVA Air, China Airlines, Thai Airways, Malaysia Aviation Group, Singapore Airlines and its low-cost subsidiary Scoot have implemented the same new ruling. Passengers who violate the rule could have their devices confiscated, be fined or removed from the aircraft.

in brief

Taiwanese carrier **EVA Air** has exercised options for six more Airbus A350-1000s and three A321neos. The deal, worth around $3.1bn at list prices, is in addition to the 18 A350s and 15 A321neos it already has on order. The jets are expected to replace its Boeing 777-300ERs and A321ceos. A timeline for the delivery of the new aircraft has not been disclosed.

Indian low-cost carrier **IndiGo** has announced Amsterdam and Manchester as its first long-haul destinations. The airline will launch thrice-weekly flights to the European cities from July, using a fleet of damp-leased Boeing 787-9s from Norse Atlantic Airways, while it awaits the arrival of its Airbus A321XLRs next year and A350s in 2027. (Photo Airbus)

Japan Airlines and **Kalitta Air** have announced a codeshare agreement on cargo services between Tokyo/Narita and Chicago/O'Hare starting May 10. The Japanese flag carrier said the new agreement will enable it to "meet the continued strong demand for cargo transportation between Asia and North America by providing stable and flexible air cargo services with the addition of large cargo aircraft from another company".

Malaysia's **AirAsia** is expanding its presence in Australia by launching a new four-times-weekly flight from Kuala Lumpur to Darwin on June 7. The route joins the low-cost airline's existing service from the Malaysian capital to Perth, which launched in March 2024 and has carried more than 600,000 passengers so far.

Air Hong Kong is delaying the retirement of its Airbus A300-600F fleet until the end of this year. The news was revealed with owner Cathay Pacific Group's latest set of financial results. The cargo subsidiary retired three examples retired last year and one in 2023. The 20-year-old A300s operate alongside the carrier's two A330-200Fs and ten A330-300P2Fs.

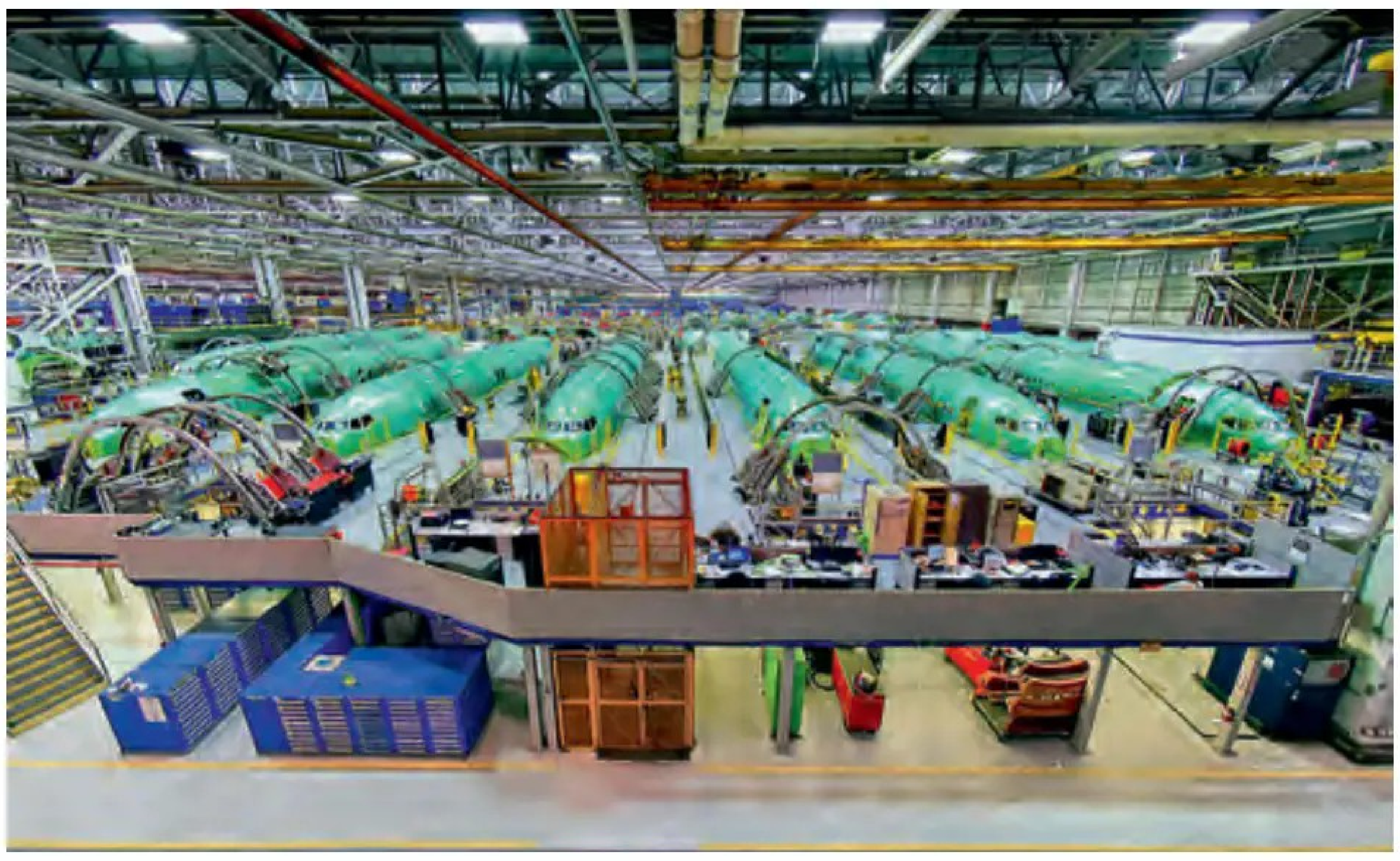
Cash flow problems at **Spirit AeroSystems**

SPIRIT AEROSYSTEMS lost more money in the fourth quarter of 2024 than it had previously predicted and warned that it needs more cash to continue operating. It lost $2.1bn across the year, with $631m of it coming in the last three months, when it had expected to lose $413m. The results comes as the manufacturer continues advancing a plan to be acquired by Boeing and to divest to Airbus any manufacturing work it undertakes for the European company. Spirit and Boeing have said they expect to close their combination in mid-2025.

Spirit's operations have been troubled by issues with quality for several years but worsened last year, as Boeing slowed 737 fuselage deliveries to address defects and also halted all 737 production for almost three months during a machinists' strike. Its Airbus programmes, which include composite-structures manufacturing for the A220 and A350, have generated significant financial losses.

In a statement, the Wichita-based firm said: "Although the customer advances received in 2024 have provided essential operational liquidity, there can be no assurance that Spirit will be able to obtain additional advances from customers, repay current advances on the specified due dates, renegotiate the due dates or otherwise obtain additional liquidity as needed under acceptable terms or at all. We will need to obtain additional funding to sustain operations, as we expect to continue generating operating losses for the foreseeable future."

Despite the losses, Spirit succeeded in accelerating deliveries during the last quarter, delivering components for 457 aircraft, up from 398 during the same period in 2023.



(Photo Spirit AeroSystems)

Jackson Square takes **50 A320neos**

LESSOR JACKSON Square Aviation has placed its first direct order with Airbus for 50 Airbus A320neo Family jets, with deliveries due from 2031. The deal includes both the A320neo and A321neo, although the precise number of each airframe has yet to be decided, as is the engine selection.

With offices in San Francisco, Dublin and Singapore, Jackson Square is part of the Japanese Mitsubishi HC Capital Group, which also owns Engine Lease Finance. According to its website, as of the end of 2024, the firm has 286 owned and managed aircraft, operating in 31 countries with 62 customers, at an average aircraft age of just over five years. Its existing fleet is valued at $13bn.

The lessor previously placed a 2018 order direct with Boeing and has been increasing the number of next-generation aircraft in its portfolio. CEO Kevin McDonald said: "This is an exciting milestone in [our] history as a longtime global leader in the sale and leaseback financings of Airbus aircraft. We are excited to add the A320neo to our long-term pipeline as we continue our mission to provide the world's airlines with superior fleet and capital solutions."

Benoit de Saint-Exupéry, Airbus EVP of sales of commercial aircraft, said: "Jackson Square Aviation has an impressive client base and we welcome its decision to become part of the Airbus family."

DAE's fleet development

AFTER SIGNING deals with "multiple counterparties" worth $1bn, Dubai Aerospace Enterprise (DAE) is to add another 17 aircraft to its portfolio. In an official statement, the lessor said that the orders comprised 80% Airbus and 20% Boeing.

DAE said all aircraft are new-generation models and are on lease to 11 airlines in ten countries. The company's portfolio comprises 89% narrowbody aircraft, of which 46% are Airbus, 49% Boeing and 5% ATR 72-600s. The addition of the new aircraft will reduce the lessor's average passenger fleet age to approximately seven years and increase its average passenger fleet lease term remaining to 6.6 years.

DAE CEO Firoz Tarapore said that the lessor was delighted to be adding these aircraft to its portfolio, which is in line with its commitment to improving the next-generation content of its fleet. Tarapore said that the transaction would see three airline customers return to DAE, while allowing it to deepen its relationship with its existing airline partners from around the world: "Amid ongoing order book delivery delays, we are continuing to source attractive assets in the secondary market to meet our growth and portfolio management targets."

Earlier this year, DAE acquired the Irish aircraft lessor Nordic Aviation Capital. Following the deal, DAE Capital's fleet swelled to around 750 owned, managed and committed aircraft with a total value of about $22bn, on lease to approximately 170 airline customers in 70 countries.

Virgin Atlantic joins forces with Joby

JOBY AVIATION and Virgin Atlantic have joined forces to launch a new eVTOL air taxi operation in the UK. The airline, which had previously partnered with UK-based Vertical Aerospace, said the switch to California-based Joby "brings together two brands committed to innovation, customer service and challenging the status quo." Joby has already partnered with Delta Air Lines, which owns a 49% stake in Virgin Atlantic.

Operated by a single pilot, the proposed electric air taxi has six tilting propellers and is expected to be able to travel up to 100 miles with four passengers at speeds of up to 200mph. Joby has completed thousands of test flights around the world so far.

The plan is to connect city-centre to airport air taxi services across the UK. However, initially, the service will start at the airline's hubs in London/Heathrow and Manchester, with passengers able to reserve a seat on the aircraft via the airline's website and mobile app.

Virgin Atlantic said that it would also support Joby's UK market entry by "marketing the service to their customers, engaging regulators alongside Joby and helping to build support for the development of landing infrastructure at key airports."

CEO Shai Weiss said Virgin Atlantic was delighted to partner with Joby "to bring short-haul, zero-emission flight to airports and cities throughout the UK. Our strategic partnership combines Joby's expertise in design, engineering and technology with the power of Virgin Atlantic's brand and award-winning customer experience."

Meanwhile, Joby's founder and CEO, JoeBen Bevirt, said they "couldn't imagine a better partner to work with in the UK."

The announcement did not give a timeline for when the service is expected to commence. However, while awaiting approval from US and UK authorities, the company hopes to start carrying passengers in the UAE later this year.

Virgin
N544JX

(Photo Virgin Atlantic)

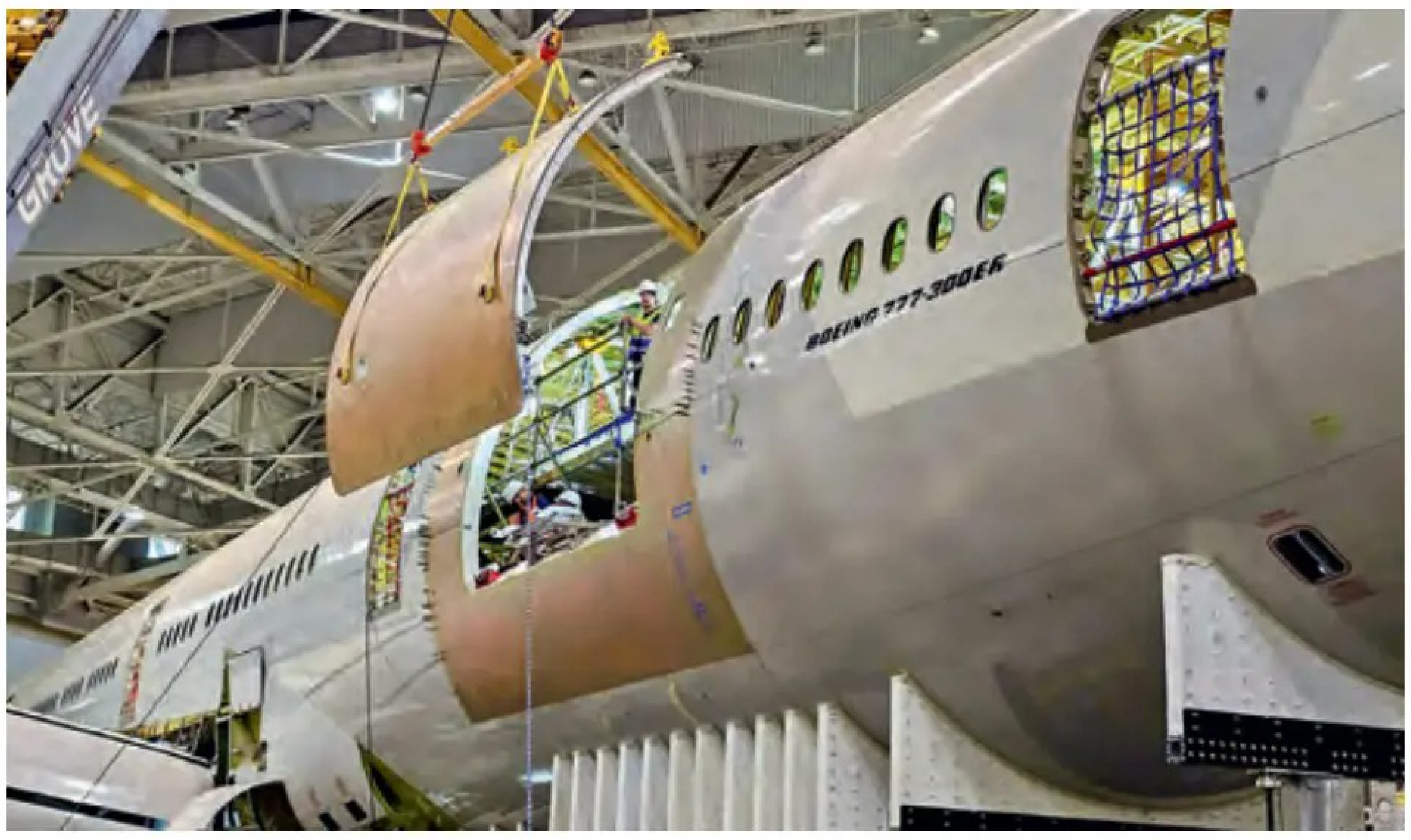
Another door closes for Mammoth

MAMMOTH FREIGHTERS and its modification partner Aspire MRO has conducted its first Boeing 777-300ER cargo door installation. The 17-year-old aircraft, N463AC (c/n 35299), was formerly operated by Cathay Pacific for almost 12 years, and Russian carrier Nordwind for just over three. It has been undergoing conversion to a 777-300ERMF for AviaAM Leasing and appears to be headed for Turkish operator, BBN Airlines.

The conversion developer said: "This marks another step towards completing the -300ERMF conversion and attaining [supplementary type] certification." Last year the US FAA granted clearance for each aircraft to carry up to eight personnel: four in the cockpit plus four supernumeraries, three of which can enter the Class E cargo compartment during the flight.

Mammoth's 777 passenger-to-freighter conversion programme began with door cutting last August and it has developed the -300ERMF conversion to complement its 777-200LRMF programme, based on the -200LR. In a LinkedIn post, it said: "It has been remarkable to watch so many teams align their efforts towards this landmark achievement."

Elsewhere, AerCap and Israel Aerospace Industries Group (IAI) are making continued progress with their 777-300ERSF 'The Big Twin' project, which offers 25% more volume than a Boeing 777-200LRF and 15% more than a Boeing 747-400BCF. (Photo Mammoth Freighters)



Embraer eyes Poland for expansion

LOT
POLISH AIRLINES

BRAZILIAN AIRCRAFT manufacturer Embraer has revealed that it is looking to potentially make Poland a "centre of excellence in Europe." The news was announced during a recent visit to the country by the airframer's CEO, Francisco Gomes Neto, to engage with existing, new, and potential partners in manufacturing, final assembly, maintenance and repair, passenger-to-freight conversions, research and development and eVTOLs.

Embraer said that "in a long-term strategic move," it would potentially build an E-Jet E2 landing gear overhaul site and a passenger-to-freighter conversion line for its E190 aircraft. This is part of its plan to ramp up production in the Commercial Aviation side of its business. Embraer is also looking at the possibility of creating a final assembly line for its KC-390 Millennium multi-mission military aircraft. Any potential projects could generate $3bn for the country over ten years and create up to 5,000 jobs.

Gomes Neto said, "Embraer has been part of the Polish aviation ecosystem for more than 25 years, and now, with Embraer growing strongly across the globe, we are committed to expanding our industrial engagement with Polish partners, covering manufacturing, final assembly, maintenance and repair. To support this growth, Embraer plans to help develop the capabilities and skills that will drive the Polish aerospace sector to the next stage of success."

The OEM has had a long history with the country's flag carrier, LOT Polish Airlines. Last year, the pair celebrated their 25-year partnership after the airline received its first ERJ145 in 1999. In March 2004, LOT became the first airline to introduce the E170 into revenue service. Today, the Warsaw-based carrier boasts a fleet of 20 E170s, 24 E190s and three E195-E2s. Across Europe, Embraer already has a "strong footprint", with 30% of components for its E2 Family manufactured in the EU.

Embraer also revealed that it has agreed to collaborate with Lukasiewicz-Institute of Aviation. The Warsaw-based research organisation provides aerospace design and testing services and research related to composite structures, aerospace systems and metal processing "on new aircraft technologies and materials." The deal, the OEM said, will involve research into "materials, future flight technologies, aeronautical design and future maintenance processes." (Photo Embraer)

Airbus Deliveries

CZECH AIRLINES
CSA
OK-EYB

Smartwings accepted delivery of Airbus A220-300, OK-EYB (c/n 55330), on February 28 after a ferry flight from Montreal/Mirabel to Prague. It is the second of two, 149-seat, all-economy examples to arrive in the livery of former subsidiary airline CSA, which ceased operations as an airline after 101 years on October 26, 2024 V1IMAGES.COM/ARTHUR RAGOUCY

Airbus delivered the following aircraft in February:

A220-300	4	airBaltic; Delta Air Lines; Air Lease Corporation [ITA Airways]; Air Lease Corporation [Smartwings]
A319neo	1	Tibet Airlines
A320neo	12	Accipiter [Transavia] (2); Volaris; Aegean Airlines; British Airways; CMB Financial Leasing [Hainan Airlines]; AerCap [Transavia] (2); Swiss International Air Lines; flynas; CDB Leasing [Colorful Guizhou Airlines]; CALC [Sichuan Airlines]
A321neo	20	Volaris; Frontier Airlines; Wizz Air (3); ICBC Leasing [Jet2.com]; Spirit Airlines (2); Asiana Airlines, China Eastern Airlines (3); IndiGo (2); Delta Air Lines (2); American Airlines; China Southern Airlines; SMBC Aviation Capital [Icelandair]; SMBC Aviation Capital [Transavia]
A330-900	1	CIT Leasing [Malaysia Airlines]
A350-900	2	Air France; Delta Air Lines
Total	40	
Annual total to date	65	

Boeing Deliveries

AIR CHINA CARGO
B-225A

Air China Cargo accepted delivery of Boeing 777F, B-225A (c/n 67836), on February 9, after a ferry flight from Seattle/Paine Field to Beijing/Capital. The six month old aircraft is shown at Shanghai/Pudong on February 20, and is one of a dozen examples in the airline's fleet AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/JAY LEE

Boeing delivered the following aircraft in February:

737 MAX	31	9 Air; AerCap; Air India (4); Air Lease Corporation (5); Allegiant Air (2); American Airlines (3); Aviation Capital Group; BOC Aviation Limited (2); China Eastern Airlines; Dubai Aerospace Enterprise (2); Jackson Square Aviation; Jeju Air; Ryanair; United Airlines (4); Xiamen Airlines (2)
767-300F	2	FedEx Express; UPS
777F	2	Air China Cargo; China Southern Airlines
787-9	4	China Eastern Airlines; EVA Air; Juneyao Airlines; United Airlines
787-10	1	Air Lease Corporation
Total	40	
Annual total to date	85	

Gatwick's pier expansion plans unveiled

LONDON/GATWICK has revealed updated plans regarding its £140m extension to its mid-airfield pier. Known as Pier 6, the extension will add eight new aircraft gates, enabling seven-and-a-half million passengers to board and disembark directly onto aircraft each year. In turn, this will remove the need to coach 500,000 passengers to remote stands, cutting 12,000 bus journeys.

The project was originally announced in 2019 as part of a £1.1bn five-year investment plan, but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the designs have changed, with the length and width of the building slightly reduced, along with the relocation of an aircraft stand service road from the nose of the aircraft to the tail. This meant that the road would no longer run underneath the building, and therefore, a two-storey extension would suffice, rather than the envisaged three.

The airport revealed that the changes would deliver "an approximate 40% saving in embodied carbon from the original design, by moving to a hybrid steel and timber frame structure, re-designing ventilation systems to use less ductwork and plant, and changing finishes will deliver another 20% saving." The airport added that the project was on track to achieve an overall Excellent BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) rating and an Outstanding rating for energy and water.

The airport is working with construction firm Mace, which built the original Pier 6 and the 197m airbridge connecting it to the North Terminal in 2005. Describing the build as complex, Cedric Laurier, the airport's chief technical officer, said: "The partnership and experience from Mace will be invaluable." The project is expected to be completed in 2027.

The update regarding the pier extension comes as the airport prepares to deliver its Northern Runway plans after the UK government announced its backing for the project. (Photo Gatwick Airport)

Schiphol's solar panel issues

SUNSHINE AND solar panels might seem like the perfect combination, but this is not the case for Amsterdam/Schiphol, which has had to close one of its main runways to arriving traffic between 10am and 12 noon due to glare from the panels hindering pilot vision when the sun is shining.

The panels, located in the municipality of Haarlemmermeer, are outside the landing area but below the approach path to the airport's Polderbaan Runway (18R/36L). In the morning, the sun shines directly onto the panels, resulting in several pilots making reports.

The temporary restriction came into force on March 4, after consultations between Air Traffic Control the Netherlands (LVNL), KLM, easyJet and Schiphol, brought together under the facility's Integral Safety Management System (ISMS).

Since the closure, weather forecasts have been used daily to decide if the runway can be used. If closed, landing traffic will use the Zwanenburgbaan (18C/36C) and Buitenveldertbaan (09/27) runways instead. However, the airport is keen to minimise their usage due to the noise impact it will have around Schiphol. The airport, together with the municipality of Haarlemmermeer and the owner of the solar park, are now discussing ways to find a more permanent solution.

Meanwhile, it is believed that Dutch authorities will be forced to re-think noise-reduction plans for the airport after a European Commission review found some shortcomings, in particular, its "discriminatory" decision to exempt business and general aviation. Part of the plan is to cap annual flight movements at 478,000 at the airport, which the country's national carrier KLM has called "incomprehensible". (Photo Amsterdam Airport Schiphol)

Newcastle's cargo plan

NEWCASTLE INTERNATIONAL Airport has unveiled plans for a major new cargo hub that could create up to 1,400 direct jobs and boost the economy in the North East by £165m annually. Officially named AirLink, the 750,000sq ft site will serve as "a key hub for cargo operators, freight forwarders and ground handling agents". The airport said that the new facility will play a crucial role in developing its growing cargo operation, which handled a record of over 6,000 tonnes last year.

The site's name was unveiled at MIPIM, a four-day property and investment conference in Cannes, France. AirLink was one of several development sites to be showcased at the event by the airport.

The plan is to build the new facility south of the airport's runway, offering direct apron access to allow freight to be loaded and unloaded swiftly from aircraft. AirLink will also be located near the A1 to ensure that goods can be quickly moved across the UK. The airport expects to submit a planning application later this year in conjunction with its commercial property partner, Naylors Gavin Black. It has a preferred developer for the site.

Alice Andreasen, Newcastle Airport's chief sustainability and communications officer, said: "AirLink is a landmark development that could create high-quality jobs, generate millions for the local economy and unlock new opportunities for businesses." Meanwhile, Michelle Percy, director of investment and growth at Newcastle City Council, added that the development of AirLink "...will provide a home for the ambitious, export-oriented businesses we are looking to bring to Newcastle. With the potential to create thousands of high-quality jobs, AirLink will strengthen the region's logistics and supply chain capabilities, supporting key sectors such as advanced manufacturing and life sciences." (Photo Newcastle International Airport)

Sky View

Insights and opinions on the industry's hottest topics

By Jonathan Hinkles, 30-year UK airline executive

Aviation safety has rarely been out of the news headlines so far in 2025. It's been a truly dreadful few months, with the 737 accident in Korea, the tragic mid-air collision over the Potomac in Washington, a remarkable escape for those aboard the Delta CRJ900 in Toronto and a slew of cabin evacuations.

Forty years ago, 1985 was one of the worst years on record for aviation safety. This summer will mark the anniversaries of the British Airtours 737 fire at Manchester, the Japan Air Lines 747 crash – which remains the worst single-aircraft accident in history – and the downing over the Atlantic of an Air India 747 en route to London.

Although it's tempting to draw comparisons between 1985 and 2025, we truly have come a long way in aviation safety since that time. For one, the Manchester accident led to significant improvements in fire safety and cabin design to facilitate evacuation. Aviation safety has also moved on in other, less visible but equally important ways when it comes to our industry's approach to reporting, openness and transparency.

To achieve a proper safety culture, every individual must have the confidence and capability to report actual or potential safety issues to their employer without fear of reprisal or detriment. Contrary to popular tabloid belief, receiving lots of safety and hazard reports is a good thing: it means that an airline is able to recognise and prioritise its risks, taking actions at the right time to keep our skies safe. That flow of information is thus crucial, especially where individuals report a mistake which they've made and about which you only learn because they've told you themselves. It's protected in law under Regulation 376/2014, which also sets out the confidentiality provisions that must apply to safety reports. Those recognise that no-one is likely to submit a safety report if they believe they'll end up on the front page of a tabloid newspaper by doing so. Confidentiality and the 'just culture' inherent in safety reporting must be protected above all.

It's against that background that a news headline in recent days has shocked me more than any of the others. A UK airline captain was publicly named and shamed after an incident in which the Airbus aircraft of which he was in command allegedly descended below the minimum safety altitude during its approach to an overseas airport. Even though reports were widely covered in the press, there are no circumstances under which it's right to repeat or further identify the individual here.

It is likely that the incident remains under confidential investigation by the operator, as it should be. Crew members involved in incidents will be stood down without prejudice from duty too, and that's a matter of routine rather than a topic for lurid 'pilot suspended after near crash' speculation. It's completely wrong for the investigation process to be undermined or influenced by media reporting. Quite rightly, none of us know exactly what has happened and why, but in the meantime the captain has been subjected to a disgraceful trial in the court of public opinion.

To be clear, I don't for one moment believe that this information was leaked by the airline or any of those involved in the investigation. We'll probably never know how it made its way into the press. That said, someone does and the individual responsible for this disclosure needs to take a long, hard look at themselves in the mirror.

Some years ago, I was tasked with handling an incident with some similarities, where a crew's confidential safety report ended up as front page news. That occurred as a result of a loophole in the handling of a request under the Freedom of Information Act, a loophole that was immediately closed. However, I know the impact this had on individual crew members, one of whom was hugely concerned for quite some time that their job and future career would be imperilled by the disclosure. I'm still in regular contact with them and can happily report that this did not turn out to be the case.

Yet at every level, media attention of this type serves only to undermine employee confidence in reporting issues through their airline's safety systems. It took us months after that episode in which I was involved to rebuild this essential degree of confidence among our crews and I'll never know what disclosures and reporting we lost in that time.

The safety improvements that our industry has achieved over the last 40 years simply can't be put at risk by the media's desire for 'clickbait' headlines. I can only hope that this recent episode doesn't detract from industry employees continuing to submit safety reports in the knowledge that they're helping to make our industry as safe as it can possibly be.

> **To achieve a proper safety culture, every individual must have the confidence and capability to report actual or potential safety issues to their employer without fear of reprisal or detriment**

ABOVE: ***Lufthansa's long-awaited Allegris product was first introduced onboard an Airbus A350-900 on May 1, 2024*** LUFTHANSA GROUP

Lufthansa's luxury heavyweight

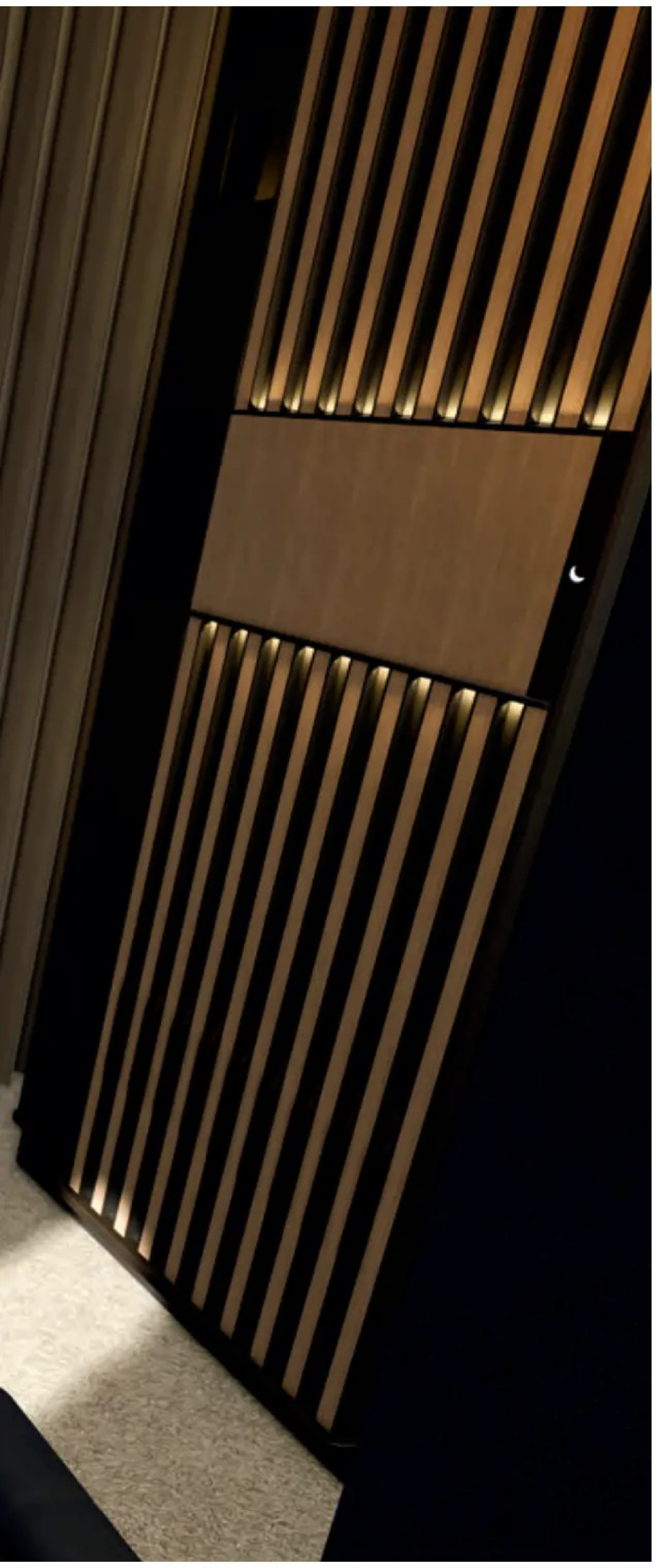
Lufthansa's new Allegris cabins, particularly its first-class suites, are setting new standards while creating weight issues for the SWISS's Airbus A330s. **Andreas Spaeth** investigates

Like other iconic airline brands, Lufthansa's reputation for excellence is often more glorious than what the airline delivers to its customers in daily operations. This is especially true for premium classes, where the German flag carrier's product standards lagged well behind the competition. Only in 2012 did the airline introduce horizontal, lie-flat seats in business class on long-haul flights for the first time, something British Airways had pioneered back in 1999.

Lufthansa's 2012 vintage seats are still the norm today in its long-haul fleet. With their lack of privacy and tight footwell, they are clearly outdated, given the competition offers enclosed suites with sliding doors. The same in first-class, the eight seats in the first compartments, currently flying in the airline's Boeing 747-8s, Airbus A340-600s and A380s, stand unshielded in an open cabin, rather than cocooning the passenger.

That should have changed back in 2020 when Lufthansa was expected to be one of the earliest operators of the Boeing 777-9. Onboard, the airline wanted to introduce the new Allegris cabins on which its in-house engineers and designers had been working on new seats for its first and business classes. The latter was developed with London-based designers PriestmanGoode and US seat manufacturer Collins Aerospace.

While a standard product cycle for most airlines lasts around seven years, Lufthansa regularly takes significantly longer to roll out any new onboard hardware. "Lufthansa always wants to bring something new, different and individually developed onto the market, and then can't decide swiftly which way to go," a former procurement executive at the carrier told *Airliner World*. "That can be quite unnerving when the logistics of flight



operations clash with the creative's ideas." All of that inevitably leads to lengthy processes and delays.

Allegris arrival

In this case, first the pandemic, then the ongoing supply chain disruptions, but most of all, Boeing being years behind on the 777-9 had a detrimental effect on the airline's product renewal. Four years later than planned, in May 2024, Lufthansa finally rolled out its new Allegris cabin, first fitted to a newly delivered Airbus A350 that went into service between Munich and Vancouver.

The main focus of attention was the new Allegris business class, with five different sub-types of seats, most of which will have an extra reservation surcharge added, that will be introduced soon. What was missing from the new arrival was the new first-class suites upfront, due to delivery delays and certification hold-ups. Instead, one extra row of economy seats was installed although this was blocked off as there were no drop-down oxygen masks installed above.

Finally, in November 2024, the first A350-941, D-AIXX (c/n 672), was delivered from Toulouse with all-new cabins installed. The aircraft was introduced into service on December 5; however, no fare-paying passengers were accepted into the first-class cabin until late January. Initially, only technicians were onboard to check all the complex systems during the flight, and sometimes, HON Circle members, Lufthansa's exclusive top-tier frequent flyer level, were upgraded.

The Allegris experience

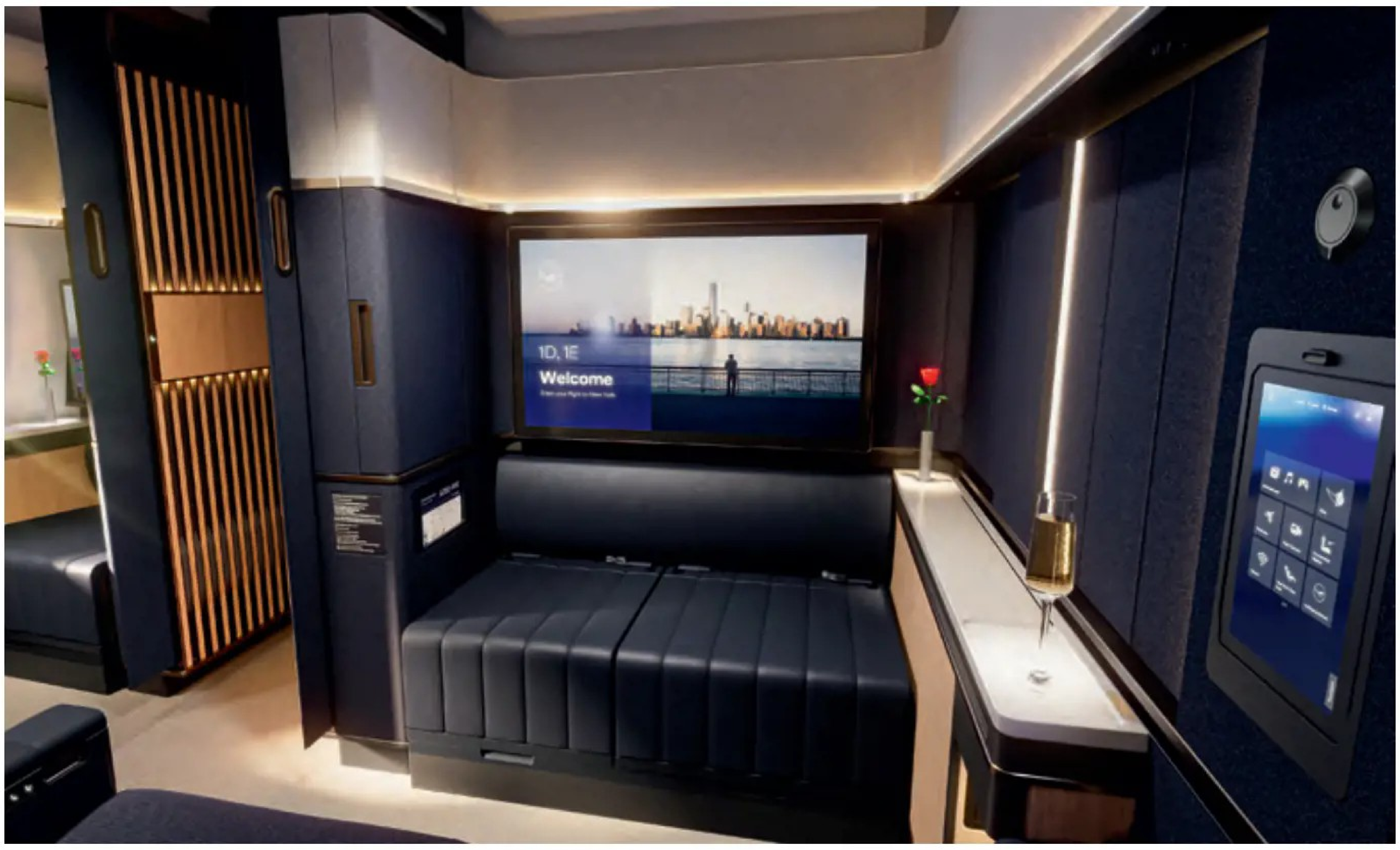
Around the same time, as a guest of Lufthansa, *Airliner World* had the unique opportunity to try out the new Allegris first-class on D-AIXX, flying from Munich to New York/JFK. The author was the only passenger in the premier cabin that day, meaning all suites could be explored. Officially, my seat was 1A, with this and 1K being the single suites, each having three windows of their own. Seats 1D and 1E are located in the huge double suites in the centre. And they are huge, with every single seat occupying 2.7m^2 (29sq ft) of floor space and the double 3.7m^2 (39sq ft). The real estate will be even bigger in the new first-class retrofitted on the 747-8 fleet, thanks to its wider fuselage – 3.5m^2 (38sq ft) for the single and 4.5 m^2 (48sq ft) for the double. Unfortunately, the first two of 19 remaining Lufthansa 747s will only be fitted with the Allegris first in 2027.

Each suite has soft material sliding doors, enabling almost total privacy inside, with walls and doors towering at 1.8m (5ft 11in). The seat width is also impressive – 89cm (35in) in the single and 126cm (50in) in the double. All this converts into equally wide and long (2.05m/6ft 9in) beds, especially impressive as a double bed in the centre measuring 126cm (50in) in width. This is probably the largest bed in the skies on any airliner, and there's not even a gap between beds, thanks to mattress covers. Interestingly, EASA has, for the first time, certified the Allegris double

»

Lufthansa
D-AIXK
22R-4L G

BELOW: *According to the German flag carrier, nine of its Airbus A350-900s are now fitted with the new cabins*
VINCENZO PACE



ABOVE: ***Seats 1D and 1E occupy the space in the centre of the cabin and measure a vast 3.7m^2 (39sq ft)***
LUFTHANSA GROUP

suite to be occupied by two people during take-off and landing.

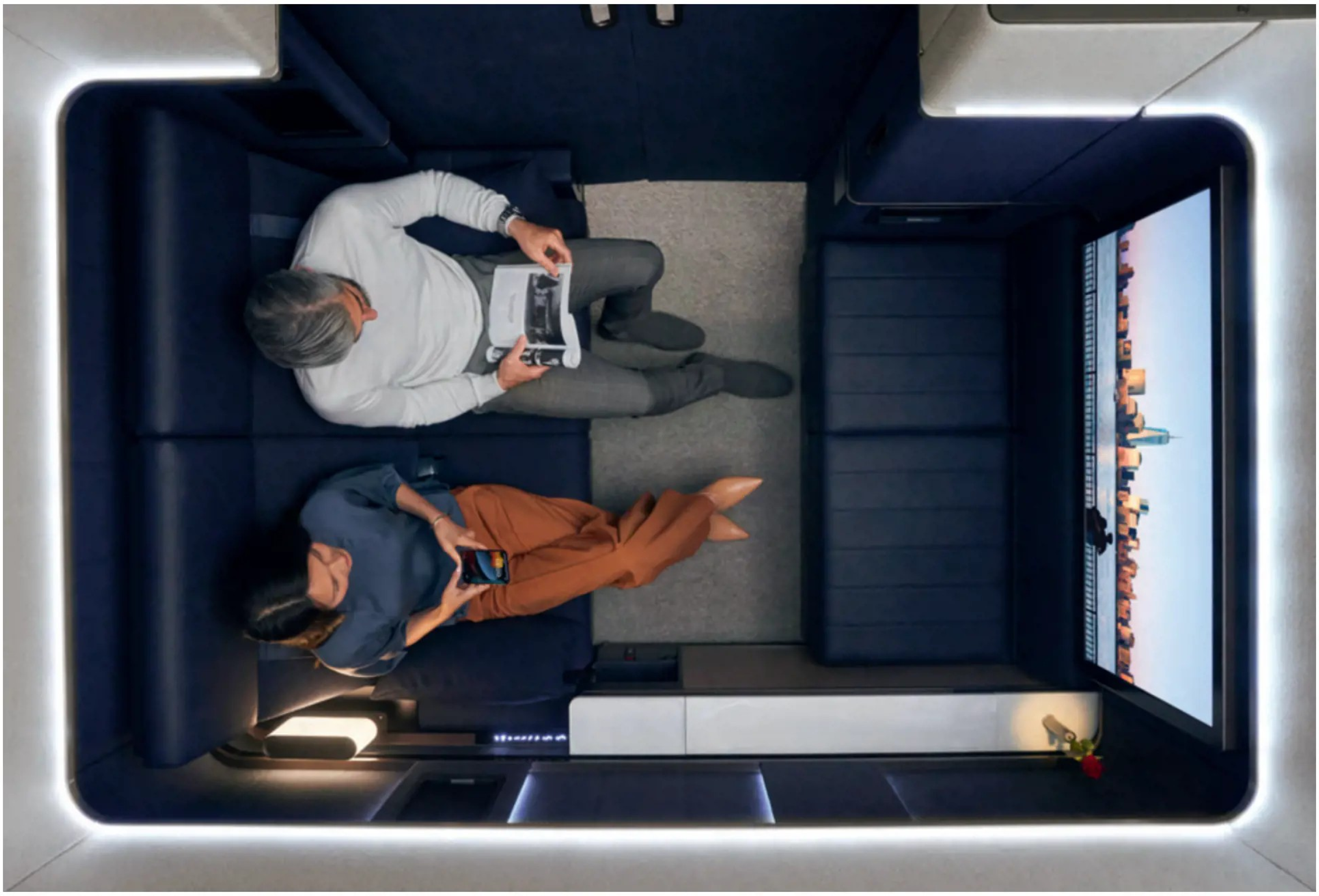
Opposite all seats are ottomans, now with seatbelts and backrest recline for guests to join. Underneath the ottomans are convenient, trunk-like lockers for roller bags or other carry-ons, plus an enclosed wardrobe. There is quite a bit of additional storage space, but sadly, nowhere to put a laptop securely within reach from the seat, which is definitely an omission. Everything looks well thought-out and handcrafted in high quality using fairly heavy materials, with the exception of the flimsy sliding doors.

The single suites have big 32in HD screens, the double has a vast 43in screen, plus a tablet for all functions (including seat heating and cooling). Sennheiser Bluetooth headphones are used to access the IFE. However, Lufthansa offers only a mediocre selection of entertainment content, no current chart albums or movie blockbusters. I counted the different music offerings and came to a total of 187 albums and playlists (nothing recent there, not even the ever-present Taylor Swift, otherwise a mainstay of airline content). In contrast, Emirates offers over 3,500 audio choices alone.

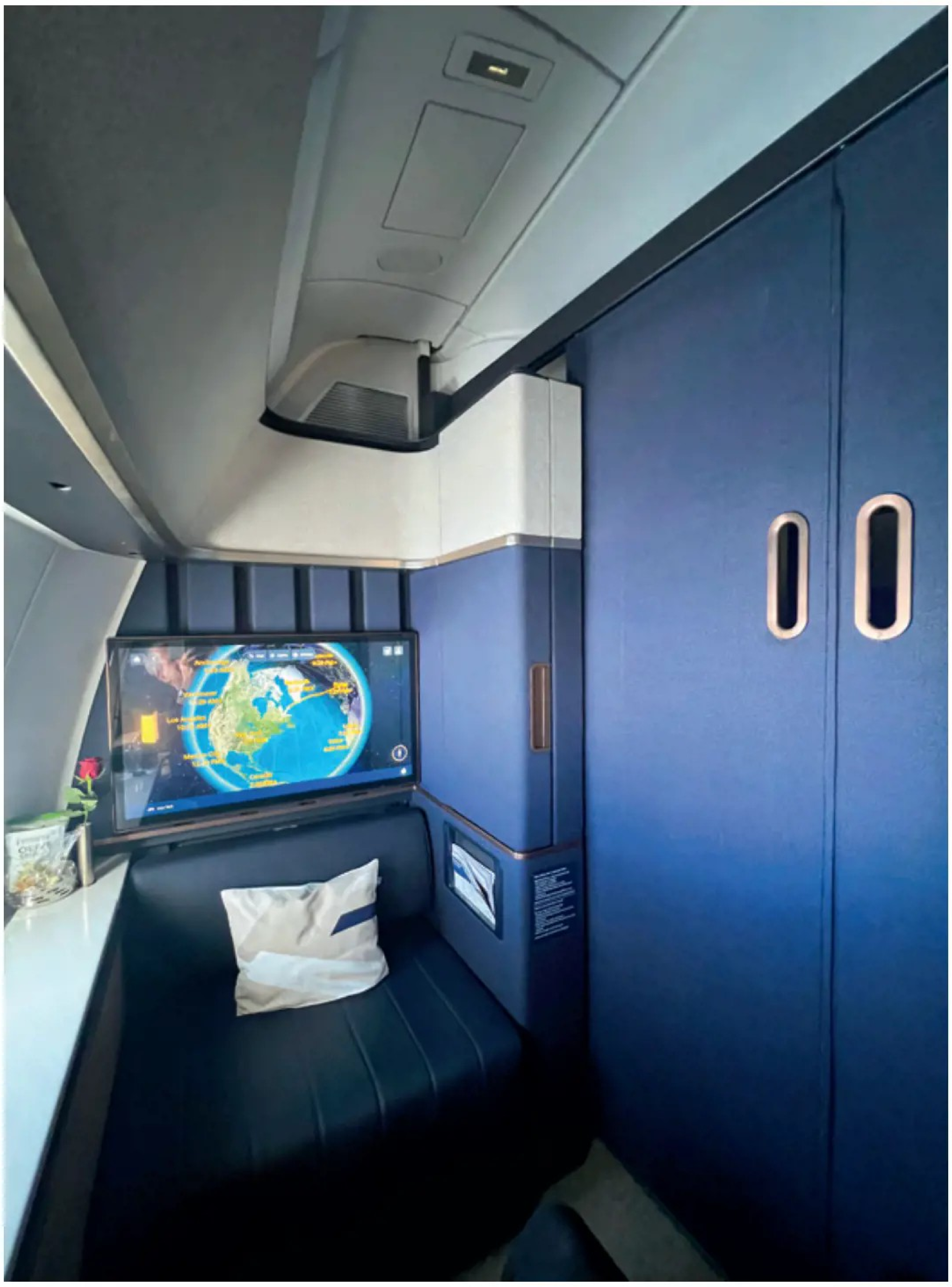
Wi-Fi is free in first-class but not elsewhere, even in business where you must pay. However, it works well.

After pouring the first glass of 2004 vintage 'Cuvée Louise' Pommery Champagne (about £200 per bottle) almost before I sit down, two eager cabin crew members working in first-class tell me I am free to ask for anything from the menu at any time. This is another feature Lufthansa only offers in first, with no dine-on-demand in business. To get started, I have two lavish helpings from a 100g can of farmed Chinese Kaluga caviar (about £200), which was excellent.

BELOW: ***EASA has certified the vast double suites in the centre of the cabin to allow two passengers to occupy the space during take-off and landing***
LUFTHANSA GROUP



LEFT: *The single suit occupies 29sq ft (2.7m^2) of floor space*
ANDREAS SPAETH



RIGHT: *The single suites have 32in HD screens and the double has a vast 43in screen, plus a tablet for all functions including seat heating and cooling*
ANDREAS SPAETH

I tasted all three very palatable appetisers and then opted for the fish dish out of the four mains offered. And while it didn't look special, the duet of pike-perch fillet and langoustine with beurre blanc and potato-leek purée was delightful; probably the best seafood dish I've ever had in flight. The wine list is mixed with relatively cheap whites and one good Bordeaux. On the culinary side, everything is perfect, as expected in long-haul first-class. At the same time, it's not as extraordinary or lavish as in some Gulf carriers, so that gourmets would go out of their way to get the Lufthansa experience.

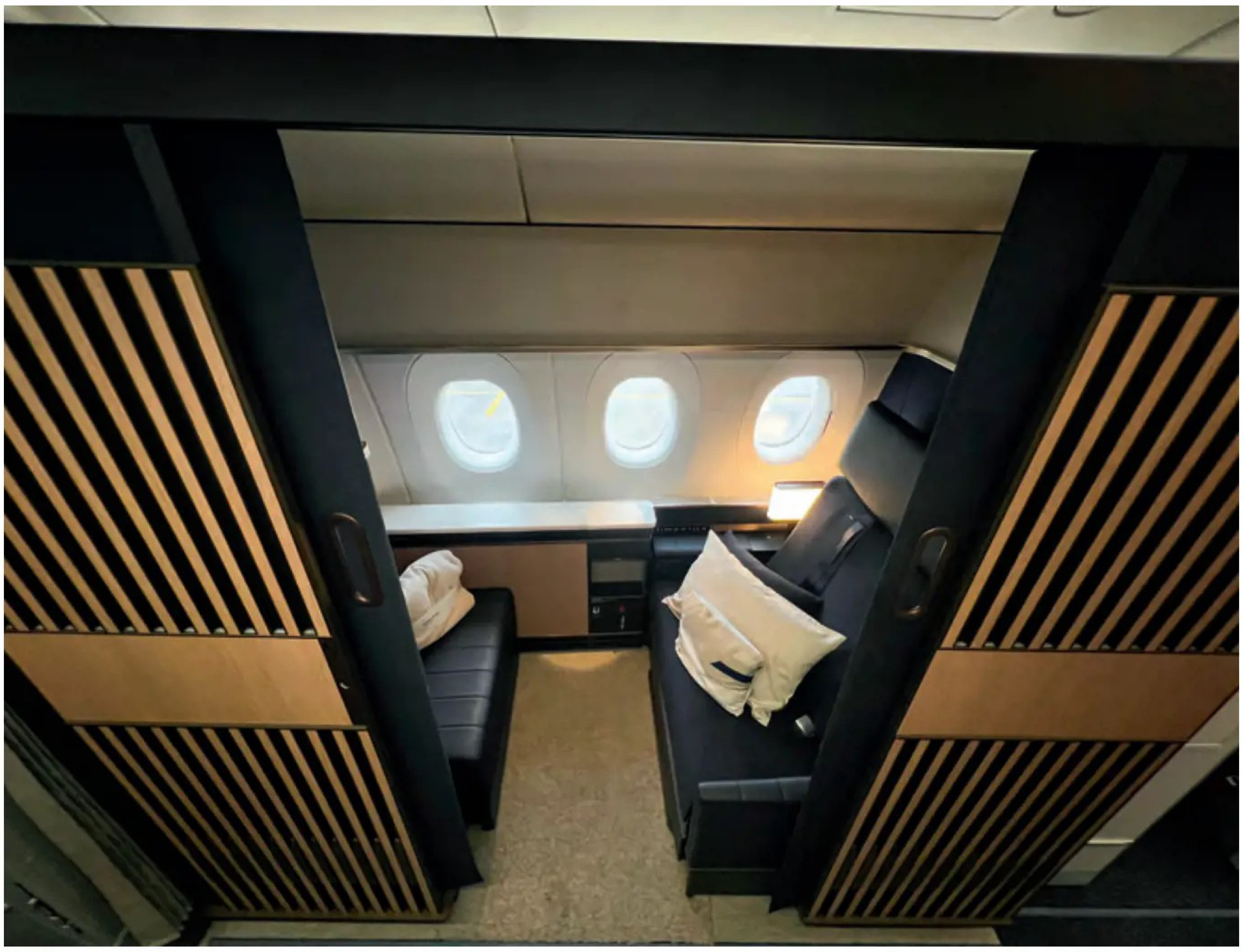
Allegris availability

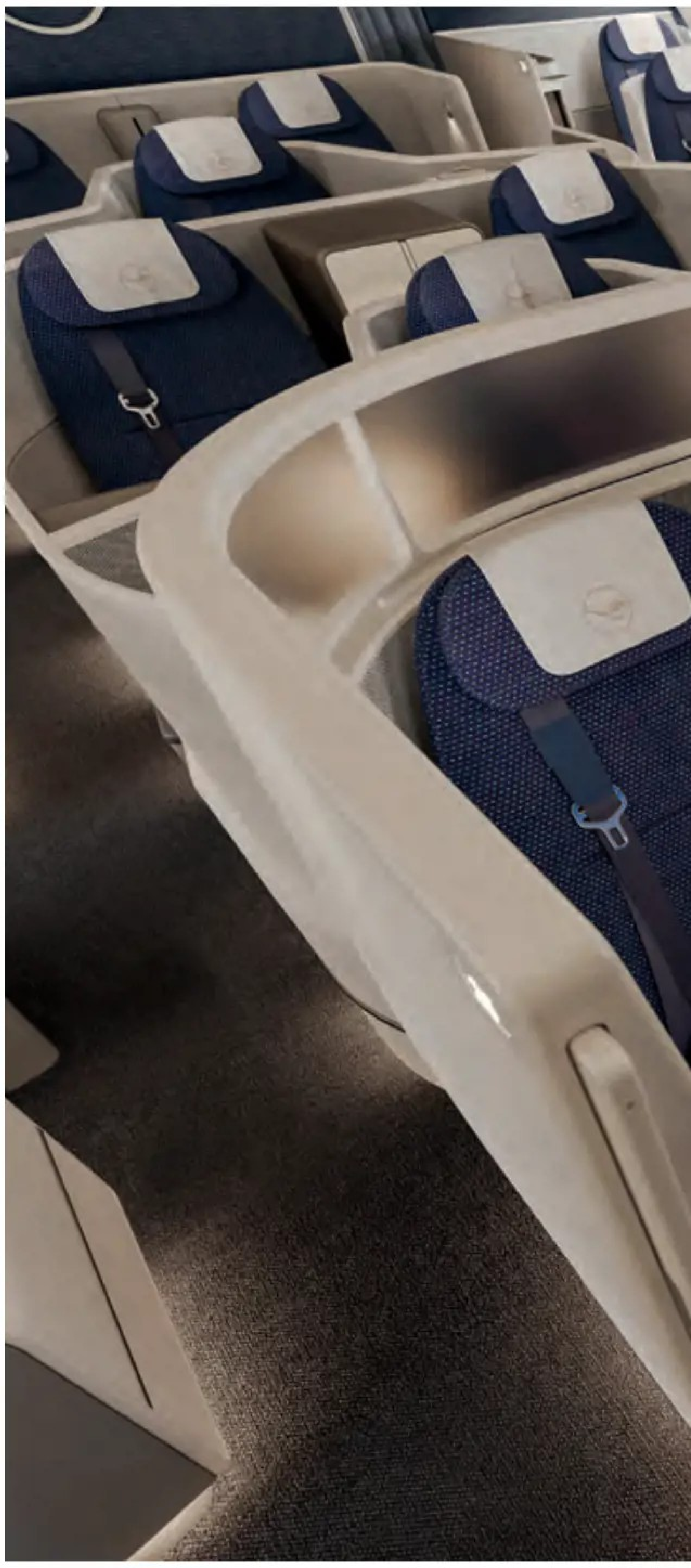
Appearing as a well-designed and thought-out top product, Lufthansa's Allegris first is a big step forward. It is currently available only on a select few flights and routes. For the summer 2025 schedule, it flies on A350s from Munich to New York, Chicago, San Francisco, San Diego, Shanghai and Bangalore. There are no upgrades, neither for money or miles, nor for coveted HON Circle members. However, the number of people able to fork out up to £11,000/$14,000 for a round trip between Munich and New York (price example for late March 2025 at the time of writing) may be limited anyway.

By the end of 2025, just ten A350s will have all-new Allegris cabins, while bizarrely, two Boeing 747-8s will initially receive makeovers on the main deck in business class, premium economy and economy. The old first-class in the nose and the current business class on the upper deck will be kept flying until 2027, giving the airline's schedulers headaches regarding which business class flier to put where on these split-class jumbos.

It will take until late 2028 before around 80 aircraft earmarked for Allegris are completed out of roughly 120 future long-haul Lufthansa aircraft in total. Currently, the airline is unsure exactly how many aircraft will get the new first product and which will get it. So far, only ten A350-900s and ten A350-1000s (coming from summer 2026) have been confirmed, plus 19 retrofitted 747-8s. Whether the 20 777-9s (now expected from late 2026) will feature Allegris first is yet to be decided, says Lufthansa. Its eight A380s will keep the current first seats on board, while its A330s, A340-300s and A340-600s, plus its Boeing

BELOW: *Each suite has soft material sliding doors, enabling almost total privacy inside, with walls and doors towering at 1.8m (5ft 11in)*
ANDREAS SPAETH





RIGHT: ***Lufthansa's Allegris business class cabin was developed with London-based designers PriestmanGoode and US seat manufacturer Collins Aerospace*** LUFTHANSA GROUP

LEFT: ***The author took his nap on the incredibly comfy bed, briefly forgetting where he was when he woke up*** ANDREAS SPAETH

Your First Class Headphones
Lufthansa

LEFT: ***Sennheiser Bluetooth headphones are used to access the in-flight entertainment*** ANDREAS SPAETH

BELOW: ***The food, while not as extraordinary or lavish as in some Gulf carriers, was perfect*** ANDREAS SPAETH

747-400s currently flying and due for retirement, will not get the new first, neither will its growing fleet of Boeing 787-9s.

In contrast, its 100%-owned subsidiary, SWISS, is committed to installing the same hardware across its entire long-haul fleet. The airline enjoys a steady stream of high-yield traffic to and from Switzerland, which warrants installing elaborate first suites across the entire roster.

What Lufthansa calls Allegris is named SWISS Senses at its Helvetic offspring. It comes with a slightly different colour palette, but other than the décor, the seats and all else are identical. The first aircraft to debut the new product for SWISS will be the A350, of which it has ten on order, with the first ones due for delivery this summer. Retrofits will be done on 12 Boeing 777-300ERs, plus all 14 A330s.

Achilles heel

A problem begins with the latter fleet, however, as the narrower A330s are not well suited to fit the mighty first suites. Regrettably, these issues dawned on engineers, designers and product people late in the long gestation period of the new product. Indeed, the suites are so heavy that they distort the correct centre of gravity alignment for the entire aircraft.

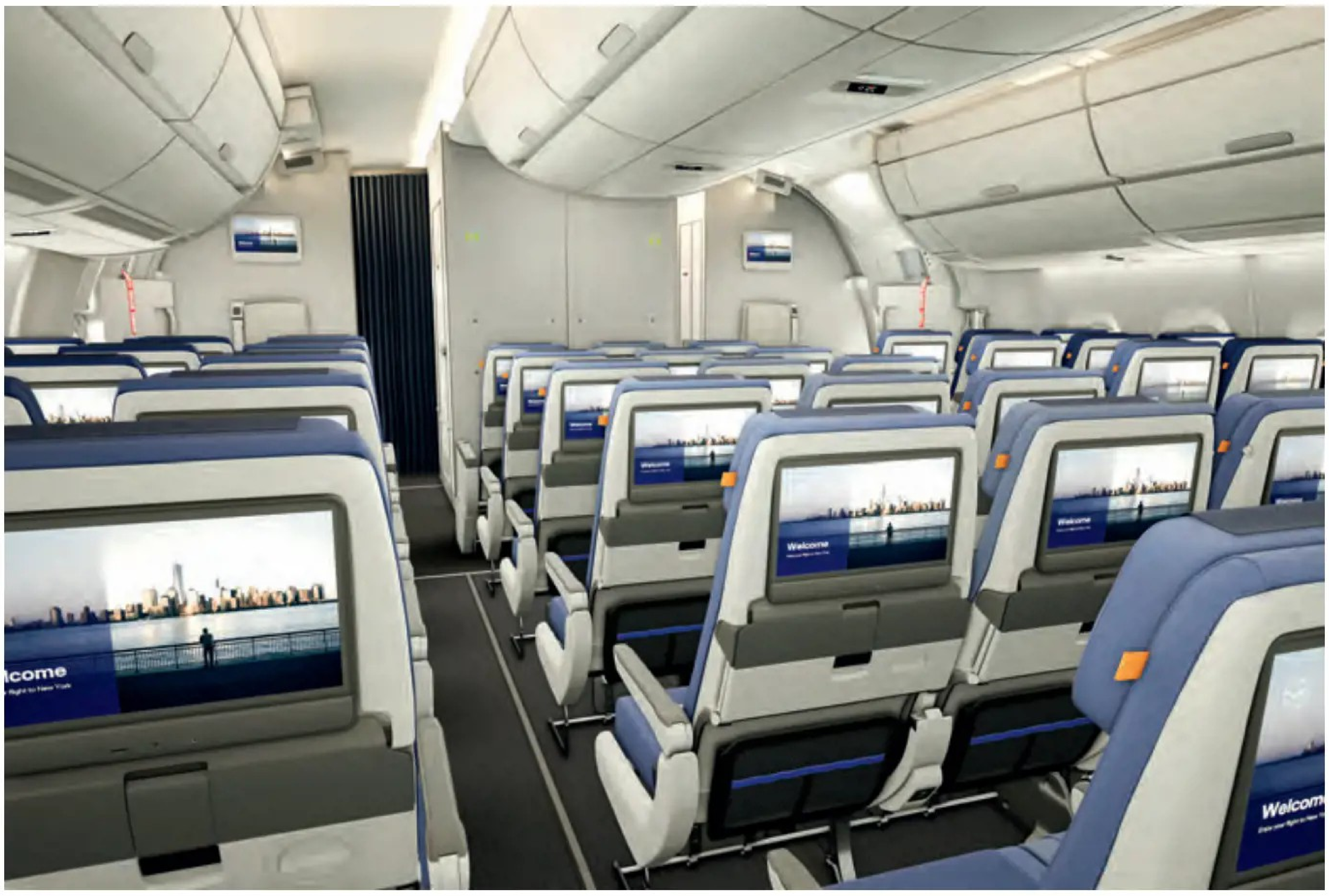
To maintain stability and control in flight, the centre of gravity can neither be too much towards the front nor too much in the back of the aircraft. The A330 is already a "nose-heavy" aircraft, which is now amplified by the fact that economy seats get ever lighter (some are just 6 to 8kg each), while the new first-class suites are incredibly heavy.

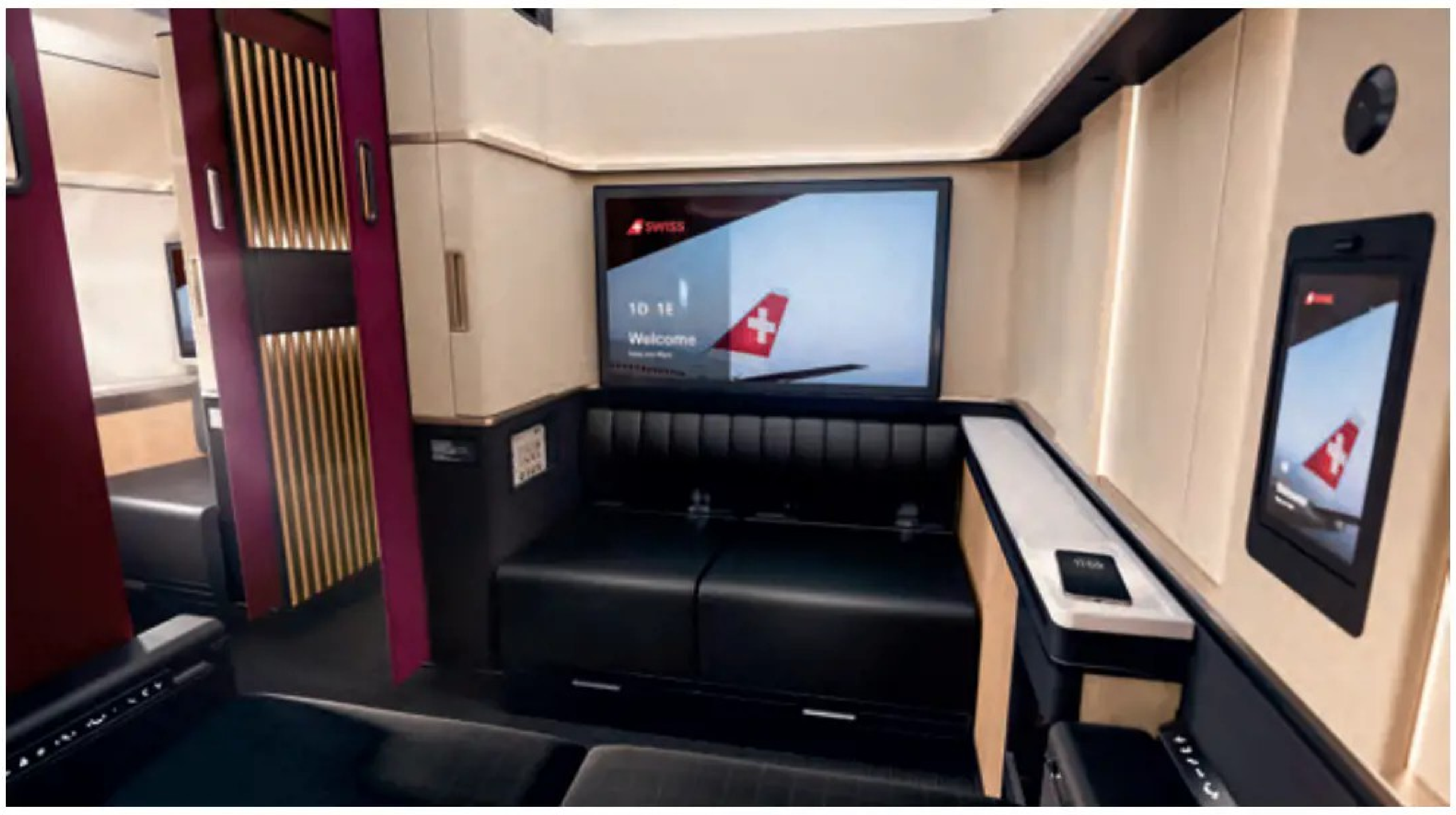
Lufthansa maintains they are heavier than before but still within the industry average, which doesn't make much sense, as the product itself is everything but average. But the airline refuses to reveal the actual suite weight. *Airliner World* reached out to other seat manufacturers not involved in this product. Their estimate is a whopping 500 to 700kg extra weight per suite.

The result is no secret: SWISS will need to install metal plates as counterweights in the tails of its entire A330 fleet. "A permanent installation for weight regulation is, in this case, inevitable," a spokesperson confirmed. The airline won't specify the approximate mass of the counterweight, as the final weight of cabin installations is not yet exactly known, and only then can the necessary add-ons in the tail be determined.

In an industry obsessed with saving weight and fighting for every gram to offload, adding an overly heavy cabin product, even one requiring double that same weight in the back »

The premium economy cabin offers customers more legroom, a fold-out leg rest and wireless charging LUFTHANSA GROUP





ABOVE: ***The economy cabin has been designed by Pearson Lloyd with "larger living space, tablet holders, USB ports and additional comfort in the first rows"*** LUFTHANSA GROUP

LEFT: ***What Lufthansa calls Allegris is named SWISS Senses at its Helvetic offspring. Other than the décor, the seats and everything else is identical*** SWISS

of the aircraft for stability, seems absurd and anachronistic. More weight means more fuel burn, more emissions and higher costs. But cashing in on high yields from top-paying premium passengers seems to outweigh these concerns for the Swiss flag carrier.

However, the airline's crews have made it clear the situation is less than ideal. "We are making big efforts in daily flight operations to fight for every way of saving fuel, however small the amount," Thomas Steffen, an A330 captain and spokesman for the Swiss pilot union Aeropers, told *Airliner World*: "The fact that ballast needs to be installed on our A330s has caused massive irritations among many of our pilots."

SWISS points out that other countermeasures have been discussed: curtailing the range of A330s, restricting freight capacity or installing more economy seats in the back to counter the weight. But all were dismissed. Instead, the airline highlights that there are no sliding doors in business class, saving 10kg per seat, and it will reduce first-class from the previous eight seats to three suites. However, this was already part of the product brief, and nothing was specific to facilitate fitting it onto the A330s. However, it remains to be seen how the airline will get its staff – and probably many customers – on board with its disputable decision. AW

The author wishes to thank Jörg Waber of the Lufthansa press team for supporting this trip.

The introduction of SWISS Senses on the A330 fleet is causing weight and balance issues for the airline VINCENZO PACE

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Spring 2025 issue of Pilot magazine showcases an opportunity to take a virtual flight in the mighty Vulcan. A Stockport-based operator is offering paying customers a unique simulator experience, with the help of a team of experienced instructors, a decade after the Cold War V-bomber's final flight.

Also inside, have you ever heard of Avions Philippe Moniot or the Simba? When you learn of the new four-seat aircraft's heritage, impressive load-carrying capacity and performance you'll realise these are names you should know better…

Meanwhile, in Cockpit Report, a past owner and display pilot revisits the classic, German-designed 1930s aerobatic trainer - CASA/Bücker Jungmann - and finds it every bit as impressive as he remembered.

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411/25

Finnair's Embraer refresh

As Finnair continues the cabin upgrade of its 12-strong Embraer E190 fleet, *Airliner World* was invited for a behind-the-scenes look at the process

Recently, Finnair has been undergoing several changes and developments. It has been forced to adapt its operation after the closure of Russian airspace, leading to increased flight times and costs on its core routes from Helsinki to Asia. This has led to fleet changes, with its Airbus A330-300 unable to operate several of the services and two being wet-leased to its oneworld alliance partner Qantas. Other changes have included the appointment of a new CEO, Turkka Kuusisto, as well as a €200m overhaul of the cabins in its long-haul fleet.

Closer to home, the airline has been carrying out a cabin overhaul of its fleet of Embraer E190s. Along with its 12 ATR 72-500 turboprops, the Brazilian-built jets are owned by Finnair but operated by its partner carrier, Nordic Regional Airlines (Norra). Norra can trace its history back to 2011, when it commenced operations as Flybe Nordic, a joint venture between the British regional low-cost airline and the Finnish flag carrier, following the pair's acquisition of Helsinki-based Finncomm Airlines. In March 2015, Flybe sold its 60% holding to Finnair, which was later obtained by Danish Air Transport (DAT),

OH-LKR
EMBRAER 190

BELOW: ***Norra* operates a 12-strong fleet of Embraer E190s on behalf of *Finnair*** ALL IMAGES FINNAIR UNLESS STATED which remains a joint owner with Finnair today.

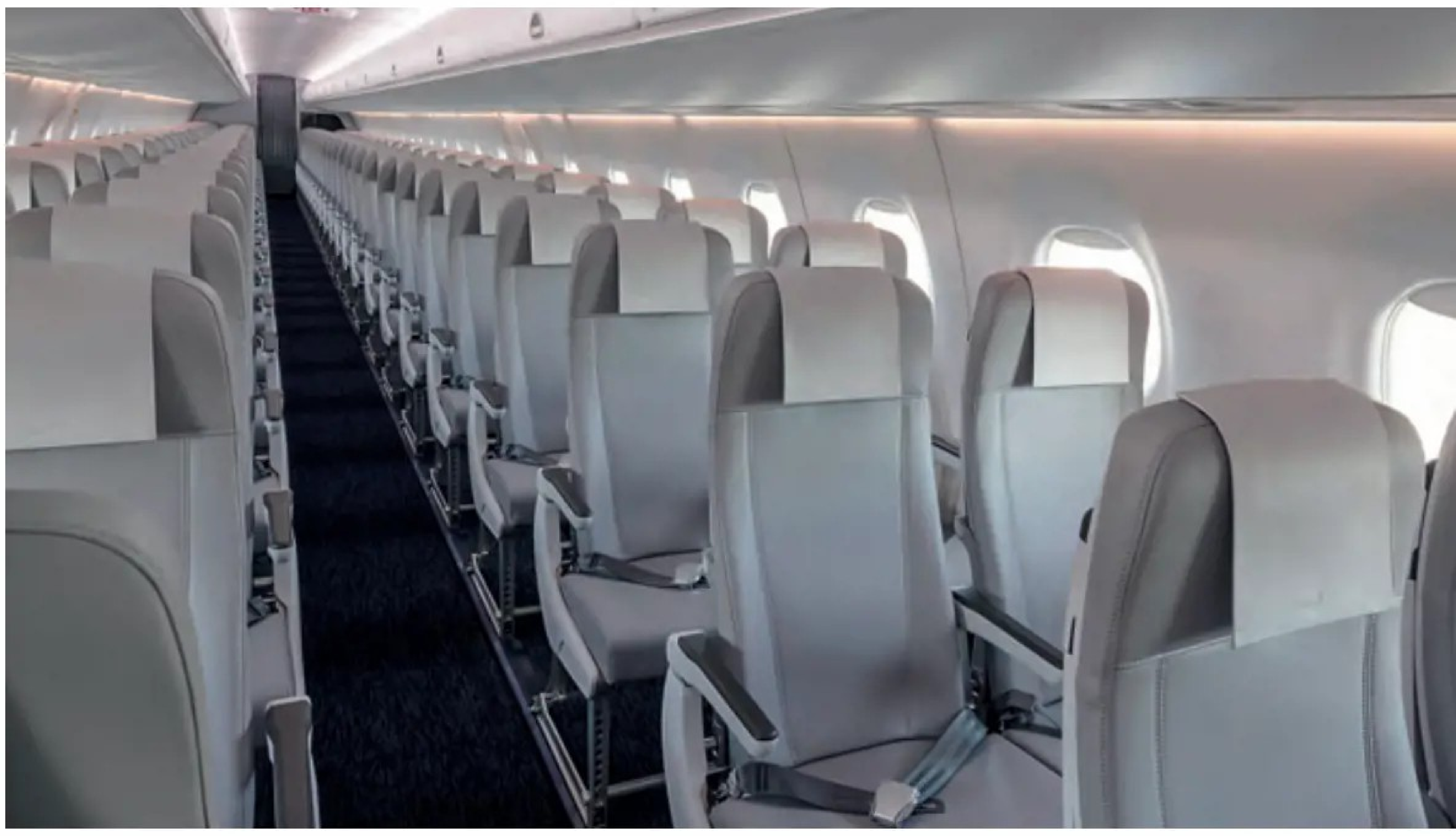
Finnair announced the Embraer cabin upgrade in 2023, confirming that the new design by London studio PriestmanGoode would include many of the elements of its newly upgraded long-haul cabins and its expanded Schengen lounge at its Helsinki hub. Speaking at the time, Finnair said the renewal was “an important investment in travel comfort that provides a harmonious, fresh and inviting travel environment for customers.”

Best fit for a refit

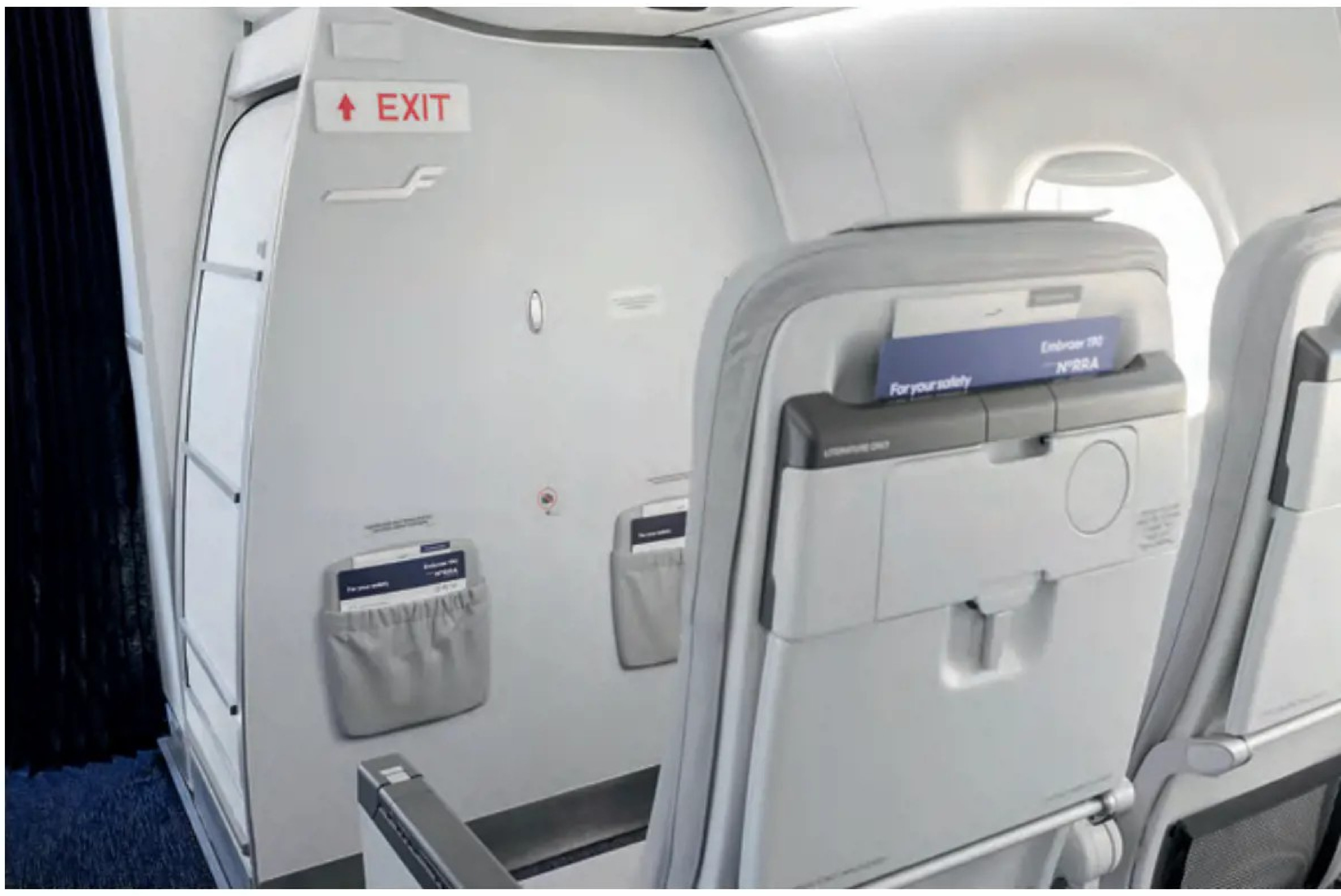
The first E190 to receive the upgrade was 17-year-old OH-LKH (c/n 19000086), which arrived in Exeter on September 23, 2024, for the refit carried out by Exeter Aerospace. “We decided to carry out the cabin refurbishment in conjunction with planned maintenance visits, so we needed to find a maintenance organisation that could do both the cabin modifications and planned aircraft overhaul. Exeter Aerospace was the best fit,” explained Eeva Mattila, engineer and project manager of Embraer cabin renewal, Finnair Technical Operations. “We have worked with Dublin Aerospace before, and we prefer to have long-term partnerships as it’s beneficial for both parties because we know how each other works, what their practices are and what our expectations are.”

Kilo Hotel returned to service on October 28, 2024, between Helsinki and Ivalo. Currently, three aircraft are flying with fully renewed cabins: OH-LKH (c/n 19000086), OH-LKK (c/n 19000127) and OH-LKN (c/n 19000252). A fourth example, OH-LKR (c/n 19000436) has also had the new seats and curtains fitted. However, the additional cabin upgrades are yet to be installed as the aircraft was not due for maintenance until next winter.

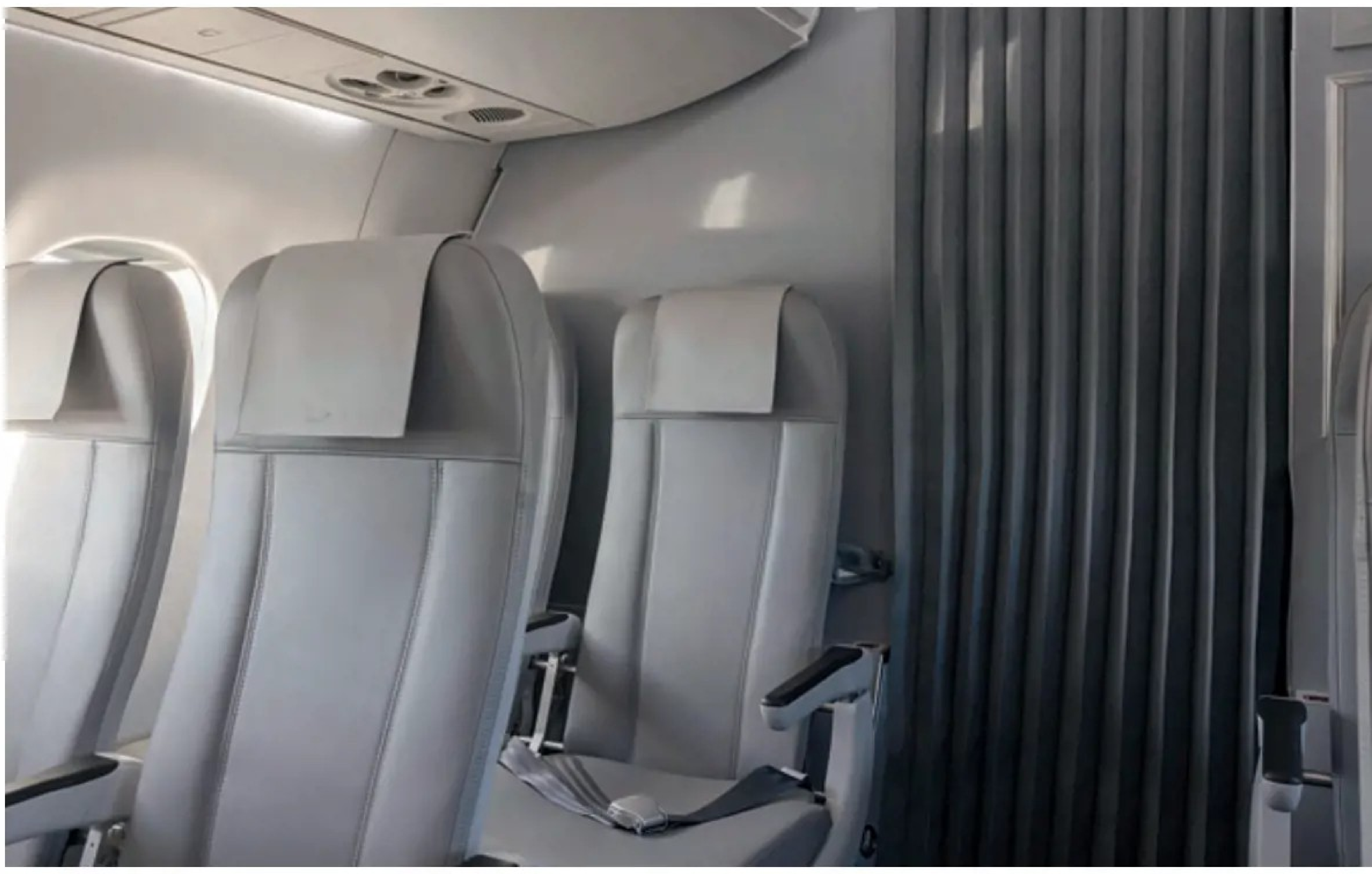
“It takes around a month to carry out the refurbishment alongside routine



RIGHT: *The 100-seat configuration has been retained, but there are two different types of seat in the cabin, the Recaro R1 and R2*



RIGHT: *Rows 1-9 are the R2 seats, fitted with a recline mechanism, added cushioning and a tray table withs a personal device holder and literature pocket*



RIGHT: *Rows 10 onwards are the Recaro R1 seats*

LEFT: ***The old seats have been cannibalised for spares and the airline is hoping to sell others*** KEY-LEE CROSS

RIGHT: ***The new seats awaiting installation at the Exeter Aerospace hangar*** KEY-LEE CROSS

maintenance," Mattila explained. "The overhaul does not increase the aircraft's ground time. Seating in the cabin would have to be removed to carry out this work anyway, so, it makes sense for us to put in the new seats and cabin fittings. By May 2025, we should have six aircraft fully renewed, plus the one with the new seats. Then there will be a break for the summer before the process continues, with the goal of upgrading the entire fleet by spring 2026."

Mattila said the airline had received really good feedback from customers who had flown on the refurbished jets: "Before this renewal, the feedback was that the old cabins were looking quite outdated. So this has definitely resolved that issue."

During our visit, OH-LKO (c/n 19000267), which had been delivered to the airline in March 2009, was in the hangar. The cabin had been completely stripped, with all the new seats lined up outside on the hangar floor awaiting installation.

What's changed?

The 100-seat configuration has been retained in a 2x2 layout with a seat pitch of between 31in and 32in. There are two seat types in the cabin, both designed by the German manufacturer Recaro. Rows 1-9 are the Recaro R2 seats, fitted with a recline mechanism and added cushioning for additional support. The tray table includes features such as a personal device holder and an additional literature pocket.

BELOW: ***The Cobalt Spectrum LED mood lighting system provides customisable lighting***

Row 10 onwards are the Recaro R1 seats. These have a pre-set backrest recline. The leather-look seat cover material has been created by a British company called Gen Phoenix. Based just outside of Peterborough, the company takes old leather cutoffs and fibres to recycle them into a product it calls ELeather, which has the same feel, durability and qualities as traditional leather, but is lighter and more environmentally friendly.

While business class is technically rows 1-9, the size of the business class cabin can be adjusted with a moveable class divider depending on demand, meaning that passengers seated in either class could experience either seat.

Other upgrades to the cabin include replacement of the old flourescent lighting system with a new energy-efficient, state-of-the-art LED system. This has been designed by Norfolk-based Cobalt Aerospace. The pair previoulsy collaborated, with Cobalt fitting the same LED system into the carrier's A330 fleet. Finnair said the upgrade "provides fresher and more pleasant light in the cabins."

The Cobalt Spectrum LED mood lighting system also enhances the overall passenger experience by providing customisable lighting options "that play an important role in creating a comfortable and inviting environment in the cabin for our customers," Mattila explained. This is done via innovative wireless technology, which allows for the adjustment of light colour and intensity at the press of a button, enabling Finnair to tailor the cabin ambience to meet the specific needs of its passengers.

Environmental benefits

One thing missing from the seats is individual charging points. When asked about their omittance, Mattila said: "There were a number of reasons why we chose to omit them. It was on the table, like many other things but, in the end, it didn't make the cut. And it didn't come down to just one specific reason. It was a combination of things: maintenance requirements, added complications to the overall modification and weight."

Indeed, the overall cabin is around 150kg lighter since the upgrade. Weight reduction by lighter seats is a little over 1kg per passenger seat, which doesn't sound like much. But when you add that up with 100 seats, plus the other weight savings from different carpet materials, it saves about 135,000kg of fuel annually, with CO2 emissions reduced by 420,000kg across the Embraer fleet.

As for the old seats, Mattila confirmed that the airline cannibalised some for spare parts that can be used in the old cabins as they await their turn to be upgraded. One other set has been sold to an undisclosed customer, and discussions are ongoing to sell others.

When asked by *Airliner World* if the global supply chain issues had affected the timeline of the overall project, Mattila said: "Well, it has definitely been a challenge. We had a tight schedule when preparing for this renewal. We knew that we wanted to start in late 2024, and we considered the supply chain issues and knew we had to keep a close eye on the schedule. We saw some longer lead times than expected but, in the end, we were able to start the renewal as we had planned. So there were no delays and big plans. This was also thanks to our partners, who were able to pull it through despite all the challenges."

Currently, Finnair's Embraer fleet is employed across its domestic and European network, primarily in northern and central Europe. The aircraft's shortest route is the 20-minute hop across the Gulf of Finland to Tallinn, Estonia. Meanwhile, the longest routes are to Rome/Fiumicino and Nice. In the UK, the aircraft serve Manchester, Edinburgh and Dublin. AW

OH-LKO
EMBRAER 190

ABOVE: ***Finnair first announced the Embraer cabin upgrade in 2023, which includes many of the elements of its newly upgraded long-haul cabins***

The author would like to thank Callum McGoldrick from The PC Agency, along with Eeva Mattila and Marjo Hämäläinen from Finnair for their help and hospitality.

ARCT AMBI

With Greenland offering new airports and extended runway capacity, flag carrier Air Greenland has renewed optimism about its future, reports **Edward Paine**

air greenland

ABOVE: ***Airbus A330-841, OY-GKN (c/n 2020), leaving a snowy Copenhagen for Kangerlussuaq in March 2023***
V1IMAGES.COM/ AARON VANCOILLIE

With the opening of the new Nuuk International Airport in late 2024, Air Greenland is entering a new chapter which it said will "open a door to the rest of the world". The runway at the flag carrier's home hub has been extended from 3,117ft to 7,218ft, meaning widebodies are now able to land in Greenland's capital for the first time, transforming airline operations, and travel across the remote region. With its upgraded facilities and modern terminal building, Nuuk has shifted the focus away from Kangerlussuaq – a former US Air Force base some 200 miles further north, which had served as the primary hub for international flights into Greenland since the early 1990s. The first flight from the new Nuuk facility on November 28, 2024, marked the beginning of a series of openings for it and two other southern Greenland airports – Ilulissat and Qaqortoq – during 2026. Initially the new facilities will be operated by existing air carriers Air Greenland and Icelandair but will allow opportunities for new airlines such as United and SAS Scandinavian Airlines which last year announced services from New York/ Newark and Copenhagen, respectively.

New beginnings

Air Greenland operated its inaugural flight from new Nuuk, flight GL281, De Havilland Canada DHC-8-200, OY-GRP (c/n 453), which took off at 7.35am on November 28, heading for Paamiut in the southwest of the territory. Its first widebody service from the airport departed later the same day. Speaking at the opening ceremony, Air Greenland CEO Jacob Nitter Sørensen, said: "This connection is far more than a technical necessity; it is the heartbeat of our society, sustaining everything we hold dear. Air transport enables fresh fish exports, trade, tourism and investment, while supporting education, family reunions, cultural exchange and access to vital healthcare, as well as recruiting and retaining employees through increased mobility.

"Starting today, it will be possible to fly from Upernavik in the north at 9.20am and land in Qaqortoq in the south by 4.30pm. You could travel from Tasiilaq in the east in the morning and arrive in Uummannaq in the northwest by afternoon – or journey from Nuuk to London within a single day."

Aminnguaq Dahl Petrussen, an Air Greenland spokesperson, told *Airliner World* that the expanded Nuuk airport offers new opportunities for the flag carrier, including a possible shift in strategy. Could the facility evolve into a hub for Europe-US transit passengers, akin to Icelandair's model, since the Danish territory occupies a convenient

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TIONS

OY-GKN
A330-800neo
OY-GKN

mid-point along the transatlantic air corridor? The potential is certainly there, she said, adding that while it was still too early to make definitive plans, Air Greenland has already established a hub-and-spoke system for its domestic routes, a model that has worked well for the carrier. "The opening of the new Atlantic airport in Nuuk will, among other things, increase tourism in the country: Nuuk will be the new gateway to Greenland. More tourists will come from places we may not have seen before. For example, from the USA. From being a fairly isolated territory, a door is being opened to the rest of the world. This requires a new way of thinking and acting for the population."

Central to the carrier's transformation is its sole Airbus A330neo, OY-GKN (c/n 2020) *Tuukkaq*, which it welcomed to the fleet in December 2022. Known for fuel efficiency and improved passenger comfort, the aircraft – which is the smaller -800 variant of the next-generation widebody – will become a cornerstone for the airline, operating directly from Nuuk. The Rolls-Royce Trent 7000-powered jet is expected to open up new opportunities for tourism, trade, and economic development, reducing travel times and enhancing Greenland's global connectivity as Petrussen explained: "In recent years, Air Greenland has expanded its fleet after the government of Greenland bought the shares from the Danish state and SAS in 2019. The entire helicopter fleet has been replaced with more fuel-efficient helicopters and [it has] invested in the factory-new long-haul A330neo, which replaced its predecessor A330-200 on the transatlantic route between Greenland and Denmark." The airline has initially deployed the A330 between the Arctic island and Denmark, with North American and European routes to follow at a later date. It also plans to serve eight domestic destinations with its fleet of eight De Havilland Canada DHC-8-200 turboprops.

Services to Billund in Denmark doubled to twice weekly from March 18, for the summer season, with a stopover in Reykjavik/Keflavik. This will be followed by the addition of a direct once-a-week flight to Aalborg, Denmark, from June 18, again for the summer season. Both routes will be operated by a Jettime Boeing 737-800. The carrier said these new routes follow on from the Kangerlussuaq-Aalborg via Copenhagen link which proved popular in 2024.

Air Greenland's domestic schedule provides good onward connections, with Nuuk currently linked with international flights to Copenhagen and Keflavik. But there is more, as Petrussen noted: "Co-operation agreements have also been entered into with airlines, such as codeshare »

air greenland
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> "The opening of additional new airports elsewhere in Greenland will also likely help spread the expected influx of visitors more widely across the remote region"

and interline, and agreements with tour operators and cruise companies, which will contribute with more passengers to and from Greenland, many of whom will fly to our domestic destinations. Air Greenland is working to be the natural first choice for travellers, as the national airline owned by the community not only contributes financially but equally well with building skills and locally anchored jobs."

New horizons

Despite the opening of Nuuk's new hub, there is still a need for a large international airport to act as an alternate for arriving 'heavies'. On January 2 this year, OY-GKN was forced to return to Copenhagen five hours into the flight when the weather deteriorated in Nuuk. Days later, the airline was forced to cancel its flight to the Danish capital citing the runway at Nuuk being "too slippery" to operate from.

The carrier said the "slippery runway can still be used by our Dash 8 aircraft, as this type of aircraft does not need as much runway length to land as a larger jet aircraft". It then reverted to the old Kangerlussuaq Airport as the arrival airport for its Copenhagen service, from where it transferred passengers to and from its domestic destinations.

Kangerlussuaq remains a popular destination in its own right, with around 10,000 tourists annually, who typically combine a stay before or after their trip in central or northern Greenland. The airline acknowledged the need for services to the settlement, especially after Nuuk became the primary hub, by reinstating the Kangerlussuaq-Copenhagen service on March 17, operating twice-weekly until October 16, 2025. The move came after the airline and tour company Albatros Arctic Circle signed an agreement to operate Jettime's Boeing 737-800 on the route.

The opening of additional new airports elsewhere in Greenland will also likely help spread the expected influx of visitors more widely across the remote region as Petrussen stated: "Nuuk with its Atlantic airport will be the new gateway to Greenland, and Ilulissat with

LEFT: ***OY-GKN arriving on final approach to the new Nuuk facility for the first time on November 28, 2024***
AIR GREENLAND

ABOVE: ***On the ramp in Nuuk*** AIR GREENLAND

LEFT: ***Air Greenland Dash 8, OY-GRG (c/n 504) touching down at Nuuk in 2021*** AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/ MEHRAD WATSON

RIGHT: ***The new terminal building at Nuuk comes with a stunning backdrop*** AIR GREENLAND

RIGHT: ***Crowds gathered for the opening of the airport and the arrival of the A330*** AIR GREENLAND

its upcoming new airport will be the new gateway to North Greenland.

"It is conceivable that the new airport in Ilulissat will mean that Air Greenland can fly more domestically, with other routes that tourists demand. This requires towns and settlements in North Greenland to prepare for increased tourism, for example by building more accommodation facilities and adventure tours. Greenland must also prepare for different and changing tourists who want different things, including tourists who want to experience the country. Therefore, the Air Greenland Group has created a digital platform, Arctic Excursions, for tour operators to easily get in touch with tourists who want to book their own tours. These operators have to meet certain requirements, but it is a good showcase for them."

More connections

The enhanced infrastructure at Nuuk's new airport is driving increased interest from international carriers, offering greater opportunities for tourism and trade. United Airlines is launching a new twice-weekly seasonal service from its New York/Newark hub starting on June 15, using its 166-seat Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft, which feature 16 business class seats. The Chicago-based carrier will be the first and only US airline to offer direct flights to Greenland. Icelandair is due to increase its service, upgauging flights from Reykjavik to a Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft for summer 2025. SAS is also returning to Greenland after being absent since 2008, with a new three-times weekly service from Copenhagen to Nuuk, starting on June 27. The carrier is expected to use Airbus A320neos in a move that "underscores SAS' commitment to strengthening travel opportunities across the Arctic", the Scandinavian flag carrier said. »

Air Greenland fleet

Registration	Aircraft	c/n	Name	First Flight	Arrived
OY-GKN	Airbus A330-841	2020	Tuukkaq	10/2022	06/12/2022
OY-GRG	De Havilland Canada DHC-8-202Q Dash 8	504	Suloraq	12/1997	11/05/2010
OY-GRH	De Havilland Canada DHC-8-202Q Dash 8	488	Qarsoq	02/1997	06/05/2010
OY-GRJ	De Havilland Canada DHC-8-202Q Dash 8	496	Tulugaq	08/1997	12/03/2012
OY-GRK	De Havilland Canada DHC-8-202Q Dash 8	498	Aqissiaq	08/1997	24/01/2012
OY-GRM	De Havilland Canada DHC-8-202 Dash 8	434	Navarana	04/1996	05/04/2014
OY-GRO	De Havilland Canada DHC-8-202Q Dash 8	482	Qasapi	01/1997	30/03/2015
OY-GRP	De Havilland Canada DHC-8-202Q Dash 8	453	Qooqa	12/1996	16/09/2015
OY-GRR	De Havilland Canada DHC-8-202Q Dash 8	497		09/1997	02/05/2023
-	Airbus A320neo	-	-	-	Late 2026

air greenland
Yuukkaq
A330neo

air greenland

ABOVE: ***Handing over OY-GKN in Toulouse on December 5, 2022, one of just eight -800s built and the most recent to be delivered*** AIRBUS/HERVE GOUSSE/MASTER FILMS

LEFT: ***The first passengers deplaning from the first widebody flight to arrive at the facility*** AIR GREENLAND

Petrussen said the airline welcomed the arrival of foreign-based airlines to the island: "We can't control the increased competition, however, it will mean that we will get more passengers into the country, who will want to go on to the rest of the country. Therefore, we must consider the increased competition as an opportunity, among other things, to strengthen our domestic routes."

However, she added: "Greenland is not built to be a place for mass tourism, [it] is a destination for adventure tourists. We need to think about the footprint we help create and Air Greenland encourages tour operators to be conscious of taking care of our nature and thus biodiversity. Even though we may be facing uncertain times, it's important that we do what we're good at – and that includes flying domestically. Of course, we have to adapt to a different context and a different way of thinking, but we know the country and the people, and that's what we need to focus on."

With a view to improving connectivity and rising to the competition, the airline is adding its first narrowbody jet to the fleet since the retirement of its sole Boeing 757-200 in 2010. An A320neo on a six-year lease from Carlyle Aviation Partners is scheduled for delivery at the end of 2026, before entering service in spring 2027. It will be based at Ilulissat, where the new terminal and new 7,217ft runway are due to open in late 2026, and will operate flights to Copenhagen. Once up and running, the facility will be able to accommodate direct flights from North America and Europe, as Nuuk now does. With new aircraft and new facilities, Air Greenland's optimism would appear to be justified, and its future may be as captivating as the northern lights. AW

> "Could the Nuuk evolve into a hub for Europe-US transit passengers, since the Danish territory occupies a convenient mid-point along the transatlantic air corridor?"

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

air greenland

OY-GKN touching down at Nuuk AIR GREENLAND

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Middle East's megalithic MRO providers

After establishing global customer bases, two of the leading independent MRO providers in the Middle East – Etihad Engineering and Joramco – are embarking on ambitious five-year expansion plans. **Ian Harbison** reports

Given the vast number of commercial aircraft in operation and on order in the Middle East, it might be believed that the associated maintenance needs would fill all available local hangar capacity. However, with the right approach, there is still room to develop an international business successfully.

On May 1, 2024, ADQ Aviation announced it had acquired 59.45% of Abu Dhabi Aviation's issued share capital. With that came a 100% stake in the Advanced Military Maintenance Repair and Overhaul Centre (AMMROC), a 50% stake in Global Aerospace Logistics (GAL) and a 100% stake in Etihad Airways Engineering.

David Doherty, VP commercial at Etihad Engineering, explained that the biggest challenge facing the latter is that its former parent has an ambitious plan to double its fleet in five years, with more than 90 aircraft on firm order.

Etihad Engineering is the largest commercial aircraft MRO in the Middle East. Its 550,000m² facility in Abu Dhabi, adjacent to Abu Dhabi Zayed International Airport, includes aircraft hangars covering 66,000m² and a custom-designed hangar that can accommodate up to three Airbus A380 aircraft.

Currently, the MRO has an annual capacity of just over 1.8 million person-hours, of which around 30% is taken up by Etihad Airways. The remaining 70% represents a global portfolio of third-party customers carefully built up over the recent years.

Doherty commented that a recent visit to the Etihad Engineering hangars revealed aircraft from customers across the Middle East, Europe, South America, Asia and Australia. Demonstrating the company's capabilities, one of the aircraft was a Boeing 787 Dreamliner for LOT Polish Airlines, for which the MRO was completing its first 12-year check on the type, involving complete landing gear replacement, disassembly and reassembly of critical components, in-depth structural inspections and system overhauls, including avionics, hydraulics, and engines. More than 300 personnel worked on the first check of the nose-to-tail programme, completing around 1,600 routine and non-routine tasks in less than 60 days, using more than 500 tools and over 1,100 part numbers.

BELOW: ***Etihad Engineering is the largest commercial aircraft MRO in the Middle East***
ETIHAD ENGINEERING

الاتحاد
ETIHAD
AIRWAYS
ENGINEERING
ETIHAD

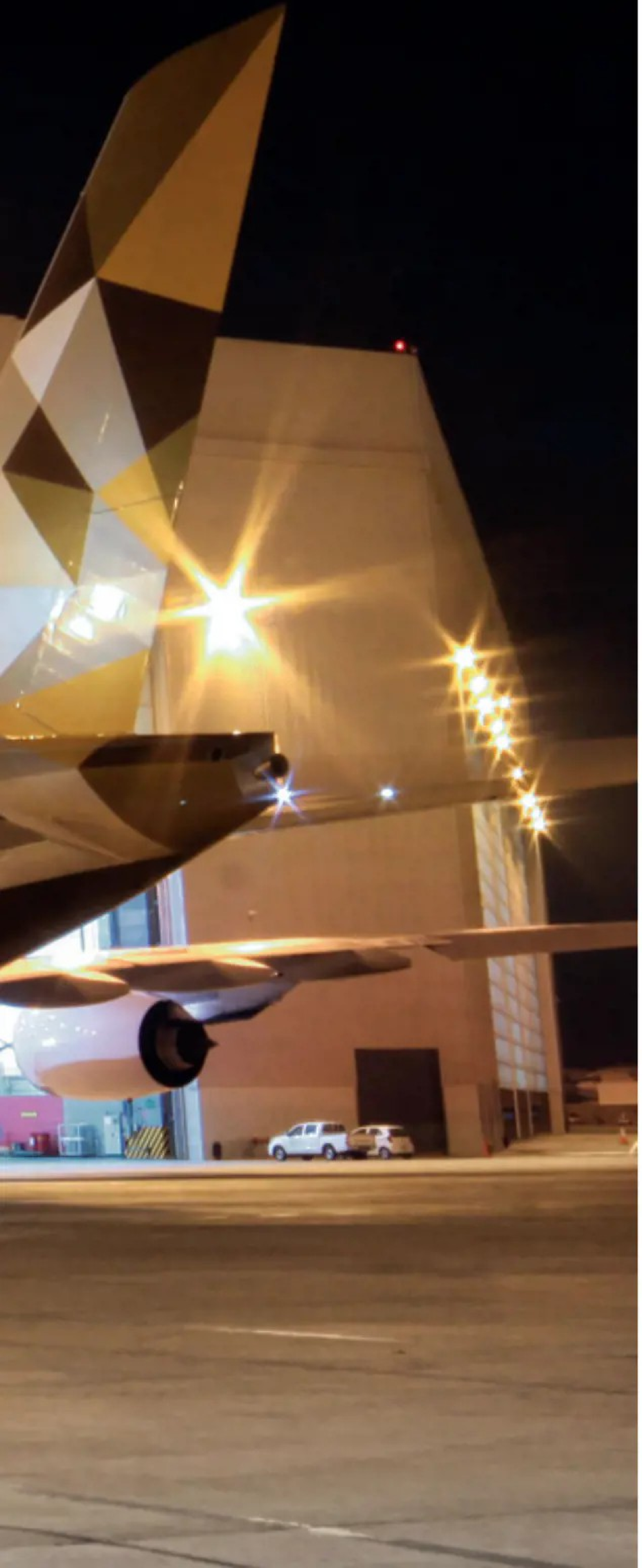
Increasing capacity needs

One of the challenges is that Etihad Airways's requirements could grow to take up 75-80% of its current capacity if the plan to double its fleet is realised. To meet the increasing capacity needs, Etihad Engineering is putting the finishing touches to its own five-year expansion plan, not least because third-party work usually generates higher returns.

The first phase, with two new hangars currently under construction (6D and 7), will add three widebody and one narrowbody maintenance lines. Phases two and three will add a further three widebody and six narrowbody lines by 2030, by which time annual capacity will have increased to 3 million work hours.

Alongside capacity increases will come a range of internal efficiency gains, including the potential benefits of exploring new enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems to digitise Etihad Engineering's operations, enhance process efficiencies, and help them go paperless. Other efforts include implementing Lean Sigma Six management techniques, which use a collaborative team effort to improve performance by systematically removing operational waste and reducing process variation. This is intended to reduce general turnaround times throughout the hangars and workshops by 10%, which equates to an additional 90,000-100,000 hours over five years.

However, Doherty says that an additional 400,000-500,000 work hours will be required to double in size. So, Etihad Engineering will be looking outside the UAE. Given the five-year timescale, he adds that greenfield sites are not an option, so the search is on for new partners with existing facilities, including joint ventures and acquisitions, so there are good opportunities to find synergies with Etihad Engineering with best practices and processes. Discussions are currently taking place with several MROs around the world.



ABOVE: ***Its custom designed hangar can accommodate up to three Airbus A380 aircraft***
ETIHAD ENGINEERING

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ETIHAD
AIRWAYS
ENGINEERING

LEFT: ***Around 30% of its annual capacity is taken up by Etihad Airways, while the rest is from third-party customers***
ETIHAD ENGINEERING

Employee expansion

In 2024 alone, the company recruited more than 300 professionals across the business, offered work opportunities to aviation students who had successfully completed their on-the-job training with the company, and upgraded the skills of hundreds of current employees through its technical training facility and industry-leading training organisations.

The on-site facility delivers over 600 training courses to over 10,000 trainees annually, including Etihad Engineering staff and aviation professionals from other MRO organisations and airlines. All courses are approved by the UAE's General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) and EASA and are in the process of gaining UK CAA Part 147 approval.

While more than 60 nationalities make up the 2,000-strong workforce of Etihad Engineering, the company is also committed to the UAE's Emiratisation goals and has been working closely for years with Etihad Airways as well as local universities,

»

LEFT: ***David Doherty, VP commercial at Etihad Engineering***
ETIHAD ENGINEERING

ABOVE: ***Demand for the A350 is such that a third line will be added by the middle of the year, and slots are booked out for the next three years*** ETIHAD ENGINEERING

RIGHT: ***Hangar 7 can hold two widebodies and three narrowbodies*** JORAMCO

colleges and aviation institutes to offer hands-on training and placement opportunities for locals. UAE nationals, including a significant number of those trained in-house through various development programmes, continue to play an active role in the workforce.

Portfolio changes

A further opportunity is to develop the skills of existing employees, particularly as the product portfolio changes. In this respect, the Airbus A300 and A340 have already been dropped as market demand has declined.

That leaves the A320ceo/neo Family, A330 (with A330neo from the end of 2026), A350 and A380. For Boeing, it's the 737NG (the MAX could follow the A330neo, but there is currently little demand, Doherty notes), 767, 777 and 787.

Demand for the A350 is such that a third line will be added by the middle of the year, and slots are booked out for the next three years. For the A380, Etihad's reactivation of five aircraft generated significant work, not least six-year checks and cabin reconfigurations, while reintroduction by other operators has seen previous third-party customers back in the hangar. In fact, the A380 currently represents 25% of the total workload.

Third-party workload has changed due to the company's reputation for quality and on-time delivery. Customers who started by using Abu Dhabi as an overflow facility for one-off tasks have gradually been assigned regular lines of maintenance work. In some cases, this has developed into a flexible relationship where Etihad Engineering can respond to an airline's changing requirements at short notice if it can reassign hangar space and personnel in time.

Although airframe maintenance gets most of the attention, component overhaul is another important side of the business. Etihad Engineering has more than 15 in-house component shops and an additive manufacturing (3D printing) facility. In recent years, the company has established strategic partnerships with component OEMs like Moog and ACME.

Joramco

Meanwhile, with more than six decades of experience, Joramco is one of the oldest MROs in the region. It originated as the maintenance division of Alia, the national airline of Jordan, which later became Royal Jordanian. Today, Joramco is officially the brand name of the engineering arm of Dubai Aviation Enterprise (DAE). In 2016, DAE acquired an 80% stake from the airline, which retains the balance.

Based at Queen Alia International Airport (QAIA), on the periphery of Amman, the facility has five hangars totalling 30,000m^2 that can accommodate up to 17 aircraft, with expansion plans currently in progress. Additional workshops handle interiors, composites, paint, and avionics. A workforce of approximately 1,200 people gives it a capability of approximately 1.5 million work hours per year.

It currently has 15 aircraft type approvals, including the Airbus A320, A330, and A340, Boeing 737, 787, and 777, and Embraer E175 and E190, along with regulatory approvals from over 25 aviation authorities. The E190-E2 will soon join the list.

Fraser Currie, Joramco's CEO, says the company is growing exponentially year on year, with the next big step being the opening a new A380-capable hangar during Q1. Hangar 7 can hold two widebodies and three narrowbodies and was constructed in association with Airport International Group (AIG), the Jordanian company responsible for managing the rehabilitation, expansion and operation of QAIA.

"The company has done a lot of work on efficiency and productivity, and it is now seeing the gains," Currie elaborated. "One of the biggest changes is the introduction of paperless operations, powered by EmpowerMX software, enabling Joramco to use tablets instead."

In the last four months of 2024, the firm enjoyed a bustling season. In October, a five-year partnership was signed with Norse Atlantic Airways for its 787 fleet. A similar agreement with SmartLynx Airlines was signed for 28

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BELOW: ***With more than six decades of experience, Joramco is one of the oldest MROs in the region*** JORAMCO

checks on A330, A320, and 737 aircraft during winter 2025. Meanwhile, a new agreement with BBN Airlines for A320 heavy checks commenced in February 2025. In November, Joramco saw the arrival of several 737s from Ryanair and A320s from Lauda for winter maintenance, while MNG Airlines signed up for C-checks on A330 and A321 freighters during 2025.

New facilities

North America is a target market as capacity increases with Hangar 7, the first of three new hangars. A duplicate of Hangar 7 will be completed in the next 18 months, followed by a widebody paint hangar.

In anticipation of this ramp-up, Joramco Academy's new facility opened in October under the company's own Part 147 approval. It covers over 5,000m^2 with ten modern classrooms, shops, utilities, as well as specialised technical workshops, an aircraft hangar, and ramp. The initial class consists of a mixture of returning students and 50 new entrants. In addition, 25 full scholarships were awarded to joining students, funded by the government's Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission (TVSDC). In total, almost 300 students a year will be attending the academy in the future. The focus is on four-year courses to get a licence split into two years of academic learning, followed by two years of practical experience at Joramco. However, the plan is to expand with type training. In addition, the company is launching a five-year bachelor's degree course in association with the University of Jordan. Currie notes that a degree is not strictly necessary for a career in aircraft engineering, but there is a demand for the extra qualification in Jordan.

JORAMCO
ACADEMY

RIGHT: ***In total, almost 300 students a year will be attending Joramco Academy in the future*** JORAMCO

JORAMCO
ACADEMY

RIGHT: ***Joramco Academy's new facility covers over 5,000m^2 with ten modern classrooms, shops, utilities, as well as specialised technical workshops, an aircraft hangar, and ramp*** JORAMCO

Third-party training is also something the company is considering. Several large international airlines want to enrol trainees at the academy to help meet their personnel needs. The idea is to put an entire customer group through the course, followed by a short period of practical work at Joramco before they return home.

Hands-on training is currently provided with a vintage Rockwell Sabreliner (formerly flown by the late King Hussein). Moving forward, the academy has received a complete Boeing 737-200 for training purposes. The latter will have power in the flight deck, so trainees can see what the equipment looks like when it is live. The cabin will be configured to allow students to develop both a complete cabin experience and structural repairs.

Looking ahead, Joramco has expanded the types of aircraft handled, with the 777 being added, with parallel heavy check lines for Emirates, amongst others. Thanks to Royal Jordanian, the next type will be the Embraer E2, with the first C-checks to be conducted soon, followed by the A350. AW

RYANAIR
LAUDA
LAUDA
RYANAIR
LAUDA
JORAMCO
COMPANY

BELOW: ***In November, Joramco saw the arrival of several 737s from Ryanair and A320s from Lauda for winter maintenance*** JORAMCO

Under African skies

Andreas Rohde flies to the far south of the African continent to travel back in time aboard a Beechcraft Model 18

As the first radial engine is started, a deep rumbling sound echoes across the ramp at Johannesburg's Rand airport, a sound that has been heard here for decades, but in recent years has become increasingly rare. Political intrigue, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic in particular has severely decimated the once vibrant propliner scene here. Of all the colourful operators, today only Springbok Classic Air maintains a noteworthy operation with its immaculately maintained Beechcraft Model 18, also known as the Twin Beech. Aware of this rare and special opportunity, excitement on board the gracious old lady increases considerably, as Captain Flippie Vermeulen fires up the second engine. Without much sputter, the old radial comes to life and soon both Pratt & Whitney engines are running smoothly, singing their own symphony.

After a few minutes warming the engines, Vermeulen releases the parking brake and our classic journey begins. As a taildragger, the Twin Beech must be taxied with care as its extended nosecone considerably reduces forward visibility. With the tail swinging around the main wheelbase, turns must be initiated early, with the inner mainwheel staying close to the inner edge of the taxiway. Once close to the runway, the parking brake is applied once again, in readiness for the engine run-up. Bringing up the engines to 20in of manifold pressure and 1,500rpm, Vermeulen cycles the propellers, checks the feathering system and the left and right magnetos of each engine. With both powerplants running flawlessly, we are heading for the runway, where the aircraft must be carefully aligned, before the tailwheel is locked for the take-off run.

Slowly, Vermeulen advances the throttles to take-off power, which is set at 32in and 2,200rpm, owing to

»

RIGHT: ***Captain Flippie Vermeulen in front of his beloved aircraft***

RIGHT: ***Vermeulen at work in the Beechcraft Model 18 cockpit departing Johannesburg/Rand***

LEFT: ***Gleaming majestically under the South African sun at Parys, the 66-year-old Beechcraft Model 18, ZS-OIJ (c/n BA-428), creates an almost perfect illusion of another era***
ALL IMAGES ANDREAS ROHDE

Johannesburg's high-density altitude. At 40kts the tail comes up and at 85kts, the old bird becomes airborne, commencing a shallow, low-level climb, which is typical for not only the Twin Beech, but most classic propliners. Initially, we are climbing out at 90kts and a mere 300ft per minute, soon accelerating to 100kts. With gear and flaps up and a climb power of 30in and 2,100rpm, the highest climb rate we experience is 700ft per minute.

Soon, Vermeulen is setting course towards our destination of Parys, located some 50nm southwest of Johannesburg, beside the Vaal River. Once beyond the Johannesburg metropolitan area, cruising at 7,000ft, or approximately 1,500ft above the ground, there is little to disturb the illusion of travelling through time. Over the wide-open grassland and occasional villages discernible in the distance, the reassuring drone of the radial engines takes us back to an epoch, when this little airliner was state-of-the-art equipment.

ABOVE: ***Climbing over the outskirts of Johannesburg while travelling back in time***

RIGHT: ***Banking left for final approach to Parys airfield***

The Beechcraft Model 18

Developed by the Beech Aircraft Corporation of Wichita, Kansas, the Beechcraft Model 18 first flew in 1937. In contrast to competing designs, the Twin Beech was primarily designed for use as an executive and regional transport aircraft, and not with major airlines in mind. Consequently, on the one hand it lacked the elegance of rival aircraft like the Lockheed Model 10 Electra, but on the other it proved more versatile and could be adapted better to suit multiple roles.

More than 9,000 examples in many versions and variants were built, in

LEFT: ***Three steps to heaven, three steps into a Tardis***

RIGHT: ***The aircraft still carries orange leading edges from its appearance in the film*** Amelia

ABOVE: ***Cruising over wide open grassland takes us back to an epoch, when this little airliner was state-of-the-art equipment***

a production run that lasted from 1937 to 1969. The aircraft laid the foundation for Beechcraft's reputation as the global leader in manufacturing business propliners. Most examples were equipped with tailwheels, although later models were also manufactured with tricycle landing gear, floats and skis.

Twin Beech ZS-OIJ

Springbok Classic Air's Twin Beech, ZS-OIJ (c/n BA-428), was built in 1959 as an E18S-9700, with the 9700 indicating the maximum gross weight in pounds. The aircraft was initially used as an executive transport and, like most of its siblings, has changed operators many times, making it difficult to trace its exact operating history. Its most prominent operator was Millardair, a Canadian airline based in Mississauga, Ontario, where the aircraft operated from 1973 to 1994. In 1998, the it was acquired by South African operator Mercy Air, which utilised it on missionary and NGO assignments throughout South Africa and the neighbouring countries, as far north as Tanzania.

The aircraft was used in the 2009 Hilary Swank and Richard Gere biopic about Amelia Earhart – *Amelia*, and the following year it was acquired by a Namibian business to fly tourists from Swakopmund airfield. But after 18 months in operation, one of the engines succumbed to the sandy conditions at Sossusvlei Lodge airfield and it was abandoned on site. In 2013, Vermeulen became aware of the dilapidated aircraft, purchased it, and then transported it from the Namibian desert to Rand. At the time, nobody would have thought this small airliner would form the backbone of the airline's fleet a decade later.

Fitted with a Hamilton Conversion, it now features an extended nose section, which is useful when flying heavy loads, as additional baggage or freight can be loaded in the nose to achieve a more favourable centre of gravity. With a capacity for nine passengers, the aircraft can achieve a range of approximately four hours flying time, plus reserves. When operating with six passengers, the range increases to six hours.

> "At 40kts the tail comes up and at 85kts, the old bird becomes airborne, commencing a shallow low-level climb"

BELOW: ***The aircraft is maintained in the Springbok Classic Air hangar at Johannesburg/Rand, and towed about by a vintage Massey Ferguson 35 tractor***

MASSEY-FERGUSON -35-

LEFT: *Touching down on runway 06 at Parys airfield*

LEFT: *The immaculate analogue cockpit*

LEFT: *The 66-year-old impeccable cabin has capacity for up to nine passengers*

> “Vermeulen graduated through the ranks of the airline, from a Vickers Viscount first officer to captain on the Boeing 747 and Airbus A340”

Captain Flippie Vermeulen

Formerly a pilot with South African Airways (SAA), Vermeulen graduated through the ranks of the airline, from a Vickers Viscount first officer to captain on the Boeing 747 and Airbus A340. Throughout his career, he flew almost any aircraft type the airline operated between 1970 and 2011.

In 1986, Vermeulen was instrumental in the formation of the South African Airways Historic Flight, which initially operated a sole Junkers Ju 52/3m. Under his leadership, the historic flight department prospered and acquired two Douglas DC-3s and a pair of DC-4s, which occasionally ventured as far as Europe and the US. In 1999, SAA decided to shut down the Historic Flight and dispose of the assets.

Deprived of his beloved classic airliners, Vermeulen founded Springbok Classic Air in 2001. In order to get off the ground quickly and take advantage of the historic aircraft void, he leased a DC-6 from Namibia Commercial Aviation, although the 60-seater would later prove to be too big to fill with passengers. The same year Vermeulen purchased his first DC-3, ZS-GPL (c/n 9581), and a

ABOVE: ***Highly polished, the Twin Beech shimmers under African skies at Parys airfield***

second would follow in 2002, ZS-NTE (c/n 11926), along with the company's first DC-4, ZS-AUA (c/n 42934). With these aircraft, the carrier possessed the same range and capacity profile as the former Historic Flight.

Both types of aircraft were typically employed on 14-day safari flights, routing from South Africa to Botswana, then Zambia for the Victoria Falls and the Luangwa Valley, before returning via Malawi and Mozambique. Local flights to the surrounding South African game reserves would round off a schedule that kept the old Douglas airframes well utilised. In addition, between 2003 and 2006, the DC-4 operated several transcontinental safari flights from as far as Basel in Switzerland, which was withdrawn in 2010 due to diminishing demand.

The first DC-3 to leave the fleet was ZS-GPL, which was sold in 2009 to a Tanzanian operator named Indigo Airways, and the aircraft is currently rotting away in a field. In 2013, it was replaced by DC-3, ZS-CAI (c/n 13541), which had previously been operated by SkyClass Aviation and, following an engine failure, was sitting idle at Port Elizabeth (modern day Gqeberha). With a well-established maintenance and engineering facility, the aircraft repair provided no major challenge for the airline and it was soon gracing the African skies once again. Such was the engineering reputation of the airline, that in 2013 it was contracted to restore N427CV (c/n CV-427), a US-registered 1944 Canadian Vickers Canso – the Canadian-built variant of the Consolidated PBY Catalina. The same year also saw the introduction of its smallest classic propliner, rescued from Sosssusvlei Lodge airfield, the Twin Beech.

The second half of the decade would see a gradual but continuous decline in the demand for classic safari flights and as a result, DC-3 ZS-NTE was sold to a German business in 2015. Travel restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic led to the complete collapse of the safari flight market, which is still to properly recover. Unlike most of its competitors, the airline survived thanks to its diversified business which includes a maintenance department, flight school, airport hotel, and a small airliner that allowed it to respond to fewer passengers and flight requests – its venerable Beechcraft Model 18.

Dropping into Parys

Back on board the Twin Beech, with a cruise power setting of 26in and 1,750rpm, we are nearing our destination at around 130kts, soon to be starting a gradual descent during which the speed reaches 160kts. Approaching the Parys airfield, Vermeulen overflies the runway to look out for the windsock and any potential traffic or obstacles on the runway, before commencing a wide left turn to position the aircraft for landing. With flaps down, our final approach speed is 85kts and Vermeulen gracefully touches down on a runway that feels barely wider than the aircraft's landing gear. Owing to the lack of any hard surface parking stands, Vermeulen simply parks on the fringes of the grass, placing the engines over the small solitary taxiway. This concludes a truely time travelling experience, that not only brought back the romance of flight, but conveyed the passengers back to an era when air travel over Africa was still a great adventure, affordable for just a select few.

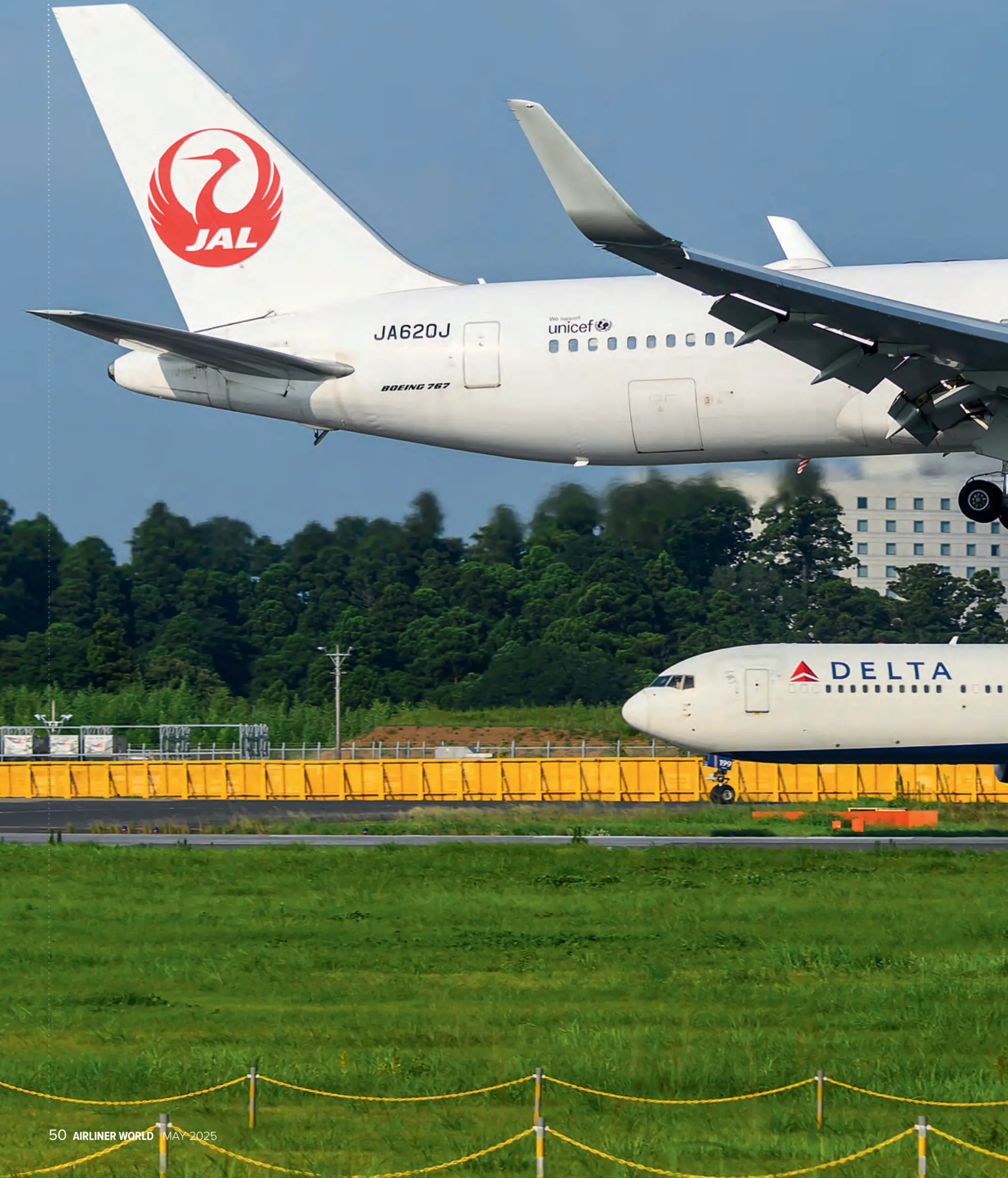
Springbok Classic Air offers this unique experience at affordable rates for groups of up to nine passengers, be it for short flights or multi-day operations. One thing is guaranteed, flying the classic Twin Beech will create an unforgettable experience... **AW**

BELOW: ***The Twin Beech is powered by a pair of Pratt & Whitney R-985 nine-cylinder radial engines, each capable of producing up to 450hp***

The Centre Spread

MAY 2025

Japan Airlines still boasts a sizeable fleet of 27 Boeing 767-300ERs, including this -346ER model, JA620J (c/n 37547), which was delivered new to the airline in February 2009. However, Delta Air Lines (see page 90) remains the world's largest operator of the widebody, with 61 currently in service, including the stretched -400ER variant AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/ANDREW HUNT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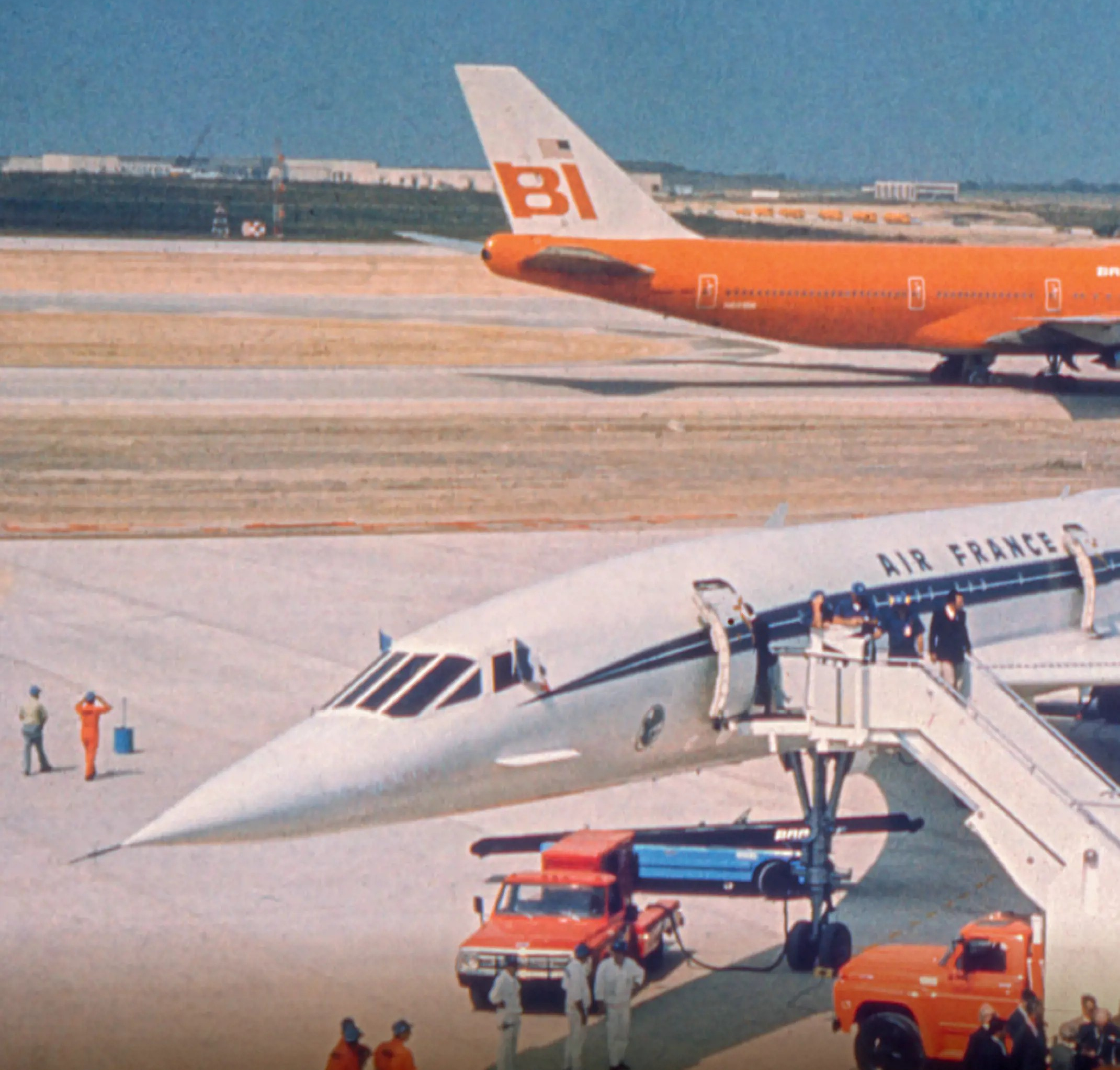

ABOVE: *On September 20, 1973, Concorde F-WTSA (c/n 102) made its first visit to the US, appearing alongside Braniff's flagship 747, N601BN (c/n 20207) 'The Big Orange', for the dedication of DFW*
JIM WILLOUGHBY COLLECTION

By the late 1960s, the Anglo-French supersonic transport (SST), the British Aircraft Corporation (BAC)/Aérospatiale Concorde, had attracted 74 orders and options from 16 airlines. Meanwhile, its larger and faster American rival, the Boeing 2707, accumulated 122 orders and options from 26 airlines. One of these was Braniff International Airways, which had placed early options for two 2707s in April 1964 and three Concordes in September 1966.

Indeed, the airline had been one of the earliest advocates of supersonic travel when its vice president of operations, captain R V Carleton, chaired the world's first Supersonic Transport Conference in 1961. The trendsetting carrier would later upstage its rivals by fielding a lavish two-week exhibit extolling the marvels of supersonic flight at the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) building in Washington DC in 1968.

A sleek and futuristic two-minute film was created, playing continuously to highlight what supersonic air travel might look like by 1975. "The things you are about to see won't look familiar because they haven't happened yet. The supersonic jet will change everything you know about flying," the film's announcer promised.

IN COLOUR

Despite Braniff International Airways' promise that supersonic transport would "change everything you know about flying", the reality was somewhat different. In the first of a two-part special, **Chris Sloan** tells the often-overlooked story of Concorde's operation with the US carrier

RANIFF INTERNATIONAL
BRANIFF INTERNATIONAL
BRANIFF

The fanciful production hyped space-age innovations like pods that could pick up passengers at a central location, whisk them to the airport, and then directly to the door of their aircraft; a motorised laundry for dry cleaning passenger garments, and a jet pack affixed to a gate agent. Innovations like push-button on-demand catering, multiple video entertainment options, and in-flight phone service were prescient.

Braniff's big plans

The 'sky's the limit' optimism of the 1960s soon gave way to a sober new reality of the early 1970s. Environmental concerns, skyrocketing fuel prices, and a deep recession led to serious commercial viability concerns being raised over the SST. The US government cancelled the 2707 project in 1971, and airlines cut their orders. Only British Airways and Air France would go on to accept delivery of Concorde, obtaining seven apiece. Braniff terminated its own options in February 1973 as the OPEC oil crisis took hold. But this wasn't the end of its dalliance with the jet.

The first Concorde to touch down on US soil was the French pre-production prototype 002, F-WTSA (c/n 102). Painted with dual Air France/British Airways colours, the jet arrived at Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) on September 20, 1973, as part of the

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ABOVE: ***Braniff International and its colourful CEO Harding L Lawrence was one of the earliest advocates of supersonic travel***
ALL IMAGES BRANIFF AIRWAYS UNLESS STATED

airport's open day before its official inauguration. The aircraft arrived from Caracas, Venezuela commanded by captain Jean Franchi, who later instructed Braniff Concorde pilots through initial training.

Braniff was DFW's hometown carrier, and, according to Braniff Airways Foundation president Ben Cass, its CEO Harding L Lawrence pulled out all the stops to bring Concorde to what was to become the world's largest commercial airport at the time. The SST appeared alongside Braniff's flagship Boeing 747-127, N601BN (c/n 20207) 'The Big Orange', for the dedication and, over the next two days, performed demonstration flights for dignitaries and airport authorities. It was a spectacular day for Braniff, DFW and Concorde. The audacious, promotion-minded Lawrence had Texas-sized plans for the jet. But real progress would have to wait until Concorde finally entered service.

While the US authorities continued to delay landing authorisation for the controversial Concorde, Air France and British Airways pressed on, putting their SSTs simultaneously into service on January 26, 1976. The former operated its maiden supersonic flight from Paris/Charles de Gaulle to Rio De Janeiro via Dakar, while the British flag carrier commenced services from London/Heathrow to Bahrain.

Finally, on May 24, 1976, the jet debuted on the transatlantic routes it was optimised for, with the two operators simultaneously launching flights to Washington/Dulles from London and Paris. New York/JFK followed on November 22, 1977, after resolving legal and environmental challenges.

Braniff was not the first non-European airline to mount a Concorde campaign. Singapore Airlines operated an on-and-off codeshare agreement with British Airways between December 1977 and November 1980 to Singapore via Bahrain. This resulted in G-BOAD (c/n 210), becoming the only example to wear another airline's livery, with BA colours on one side and Singapore Airlines on the other. However, there was a crucial difference between Singapore and Braniff's Concorde operations, with British Airways crews operating the Asian carrier's services.

The American dream

With interest in Concorde all but dried up, Air France, British Airways and the jet's manufacturers shared a common goal to resuscitate the programme. "Air France and British Airways were dying to get this into an American carrier's hands," Cass exclaimed. Braniff's visionary CEO was happy to oblige, and talks accelerated to construct a complex, win-win deal for all parties, especially for Braniff.

"Negotiations began in late 1976, and by February 1977, an agreement was hammered out, ready to submit to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) by the beginning of 1978," Cass recounts.

On June 22, 1978, at the dawn of deregulation, the CAB granted tentative approval for the SST service to begin. However, hurdles remained with the FAA in certifying Concorde for domestic service and US government agencies over tariffs.

To circumvent the tariffs, Braniff did not own but temporarily leased

BELOW: ***Fourteen Braniff pilots were sent to Europe to carry out a ten-week Concorde training course in August 1978***

ABOVE: ***One hundred Braniff cabin crew members would also be trained on the jet, conducting a service between Washington and Dallas/Fort Worth similar to its existing domestic first-class service***

the ten foreign-owned Concordes when each operated in domestic US airspace. In a complex, ingenious transaction, British Airways and Air France each created corporations, with one Concorde at a time, to enable Braniff to fly the supersonic aircraft domestically.

"We became the operator, not the owner who becomes susceptible to tariffs. And it was mainly because it was an interchange that we were using their aircraft," said Cass, noting even parts were kept under this corporation at Dulles to legally avoid taxation. Lawrence steadfastly maintained that any imposed tariffs would kill the deal. "They were signing papers with the various government entities the week before the January 12, 1979, inaugural," said Cass. "But they got it arranged and done."

Fourteen Braniff International pilots travelled to Bristol, England, or Toulouse, France, to begin training for Concorde services on August 3, 1978, following the granting of approval for the new interchange services. The crews trained for ten weeks, including a self-taught ground school that required viewing 4,500 slides, simulator training, and actual aircraft flight time. Training at $250,000 per pilot was provided free by European manufacturer Airbus. "They wanted us to slip into this and make it just as easy as possible," Cass asserts.

Ultimately, 17 Braniff pilots would be trained to fly Concorde and around 100 senior cabin crew, who conducted a service similar to its existing domestic first-class.

A dream becomes a reality

Braniff's Concorde service was scheduled to begin on November 1, 1978. However, the considerable undertaking of such a ground-breaking project delayed the launch for an additional two months. Finally, on January 12, 1979, Lawrence's supersonic dreams became reality. Beginning at Washington/Dulles, Air France and British Airways Concordes F-BTSD (c/n 213) and G-BOAE (c/n 212) were dispatched for the occasion, flown by Braniff pilots. Due to the heavy snow, inaugural ceremonies and boarding of dignitaries for the DFW subsonic segment, the two supersonic jets departed 20 minutes late.

At 40 miles out, the two crews began co-ordinating for the simultaneous landings on the east and west runways at DFW, and the touchdowns were perfectly timed. Following the historic landing, the two arriving Concordes rolled out on their respective runways and joined each other for a dual taxi to the Braniff Terminal 2W. With their sleek noses lowered to 5° for taxiing, the pair pulled up between Gates 10 and 13 to a huge crowd. Then, the captains of both Concordes lowered the noses of their respective aircraft fully down to 12.5° to salute the attendees to mark the moment.

Passengers received a royal Texas welcome, with a serenade by the W T White High School Longhorn Marching Band and Drill Team and the state's famous yellow roses handed out. A pair of horse-drawn carriages were also on the tarmac, representing the remarkable progress the world had made in transportation. »

> "The audacious, promotion-minded Lawrence had Texas-sized plans for Concorde. But real progress would have to wait until Concorde finally entered service"

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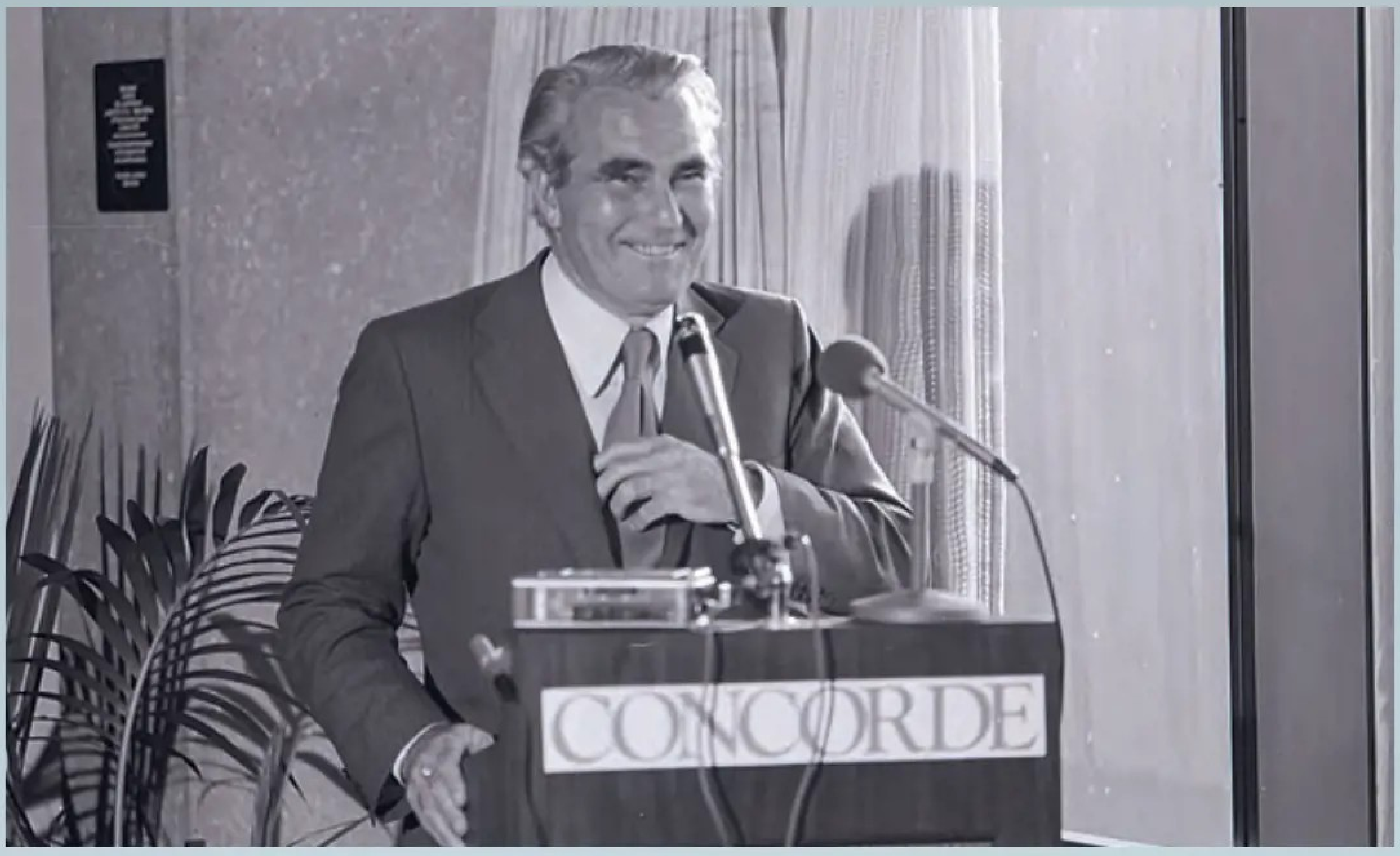
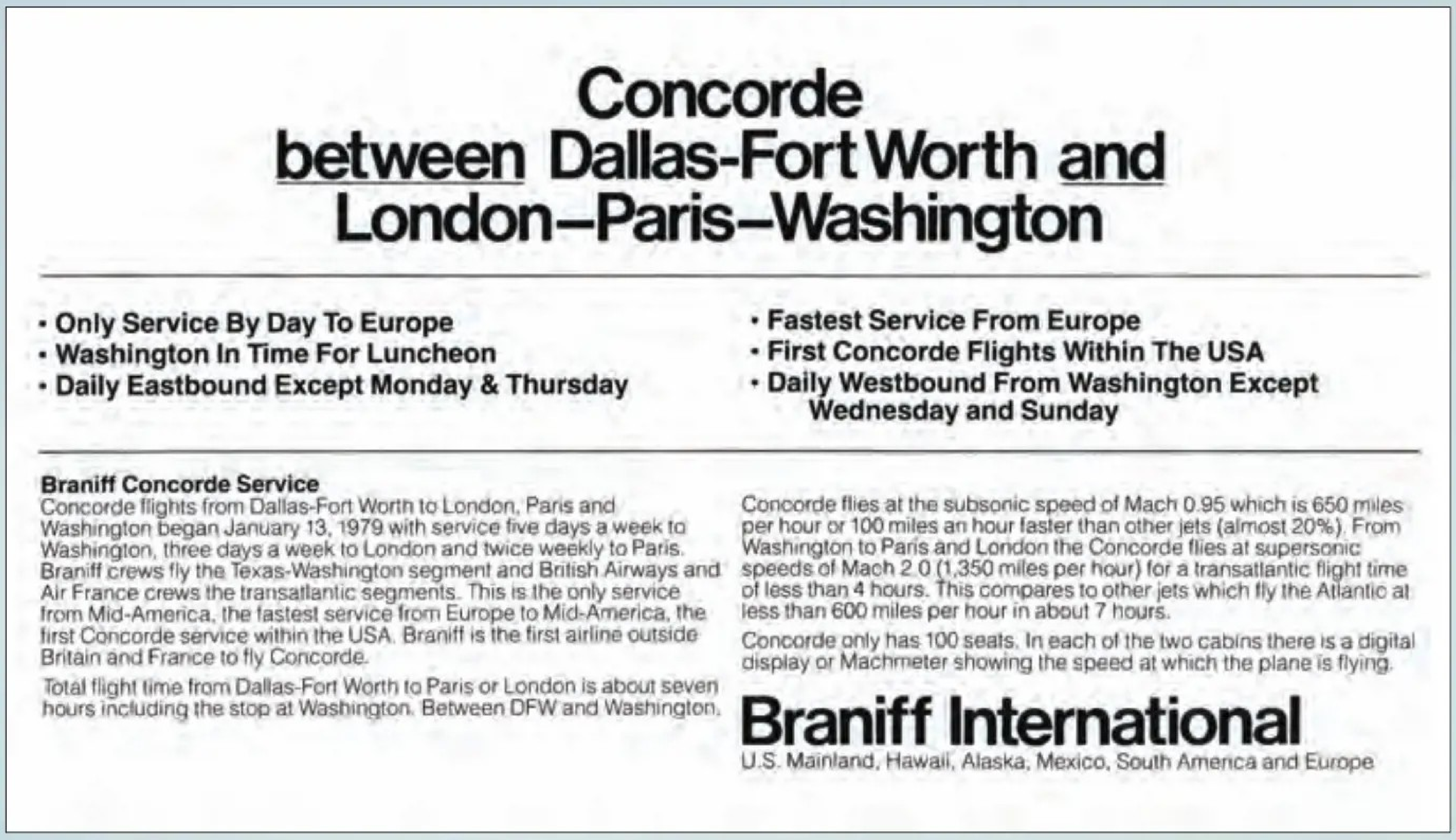
BELOW: ***British Airways Concorde G-BOAE (c/n 212) at Washington/ Dulles on January 12, 1979, before operating the subsonic sector to DFW***



LEFT: ***Braniff CEO Lawrence speaking at the Concorde inaugural reception on January 12, 1979***

BELOW: ***The airline heavily promoted its Concorde service, highlighting the time savings when compared to its subsonic rivals***



Concorde between Dallas-Fort Worth and London–Paris–Washington

- **Only Service By Day To Europe**
- **Washington In Time For Luncheon**
- **Daily Eastbound Except Monday & Thursday**
- **Fastest Service From Europe**
- **First Concorde Flights Within The USA**
- **Daily Westbound From Washington Except Wednesday and Sunday**

Braniff Concorde Service
Concorde flights from Dallas-Fort Worth to London, Paris and Washington began January 13, 1979 with service five days a week to Washington, three days a week to London and twice weekly to Paris. Braniff crews fly the Texas-Washington segment and British Airways and Air France crews the transatlantic segments. This is the only service from Mid-America, the fastest service from Europe to Mid-America, the first Concorde service within the USA. Braniff is the first airline outside Britain and France to fly Concorde.

Total flight time from Dallas-Fort Worth to Paris or London is about seven hours including the stop at Washington. Between DFW and Washington.

Concorde flies at the subsonic speed of Mach 0.95 which is 650 miles per hour or 100 miles an hour faster than other jets (almost 20%). From Washington to Paris and London the Concorde flies at supersonic speeds of Mach 2.0 (1,350 miles per hour) for a transatlantic flight time of less than 4 hours. This compares to other jets which fly the Atlantic at less than 600 miles per hour in about 7 hours.

Concorde only has 100 seats. In each of the two cabins there is a digital display or Machmeter showing the speed at which the plane is flying.

Braniff International
U.S. Mainland, Hawaii, Alaska, Mexico, South America and Europe

The next morning, on the fifth anniversary of the beginning of scheduled airline service at Dallas/Fort Worth, the two Concordes, re-registered N94FC and N94AE, departed for Washington, initiating the new interchange, the first of its kind involving a US carrier and foreign airlines.

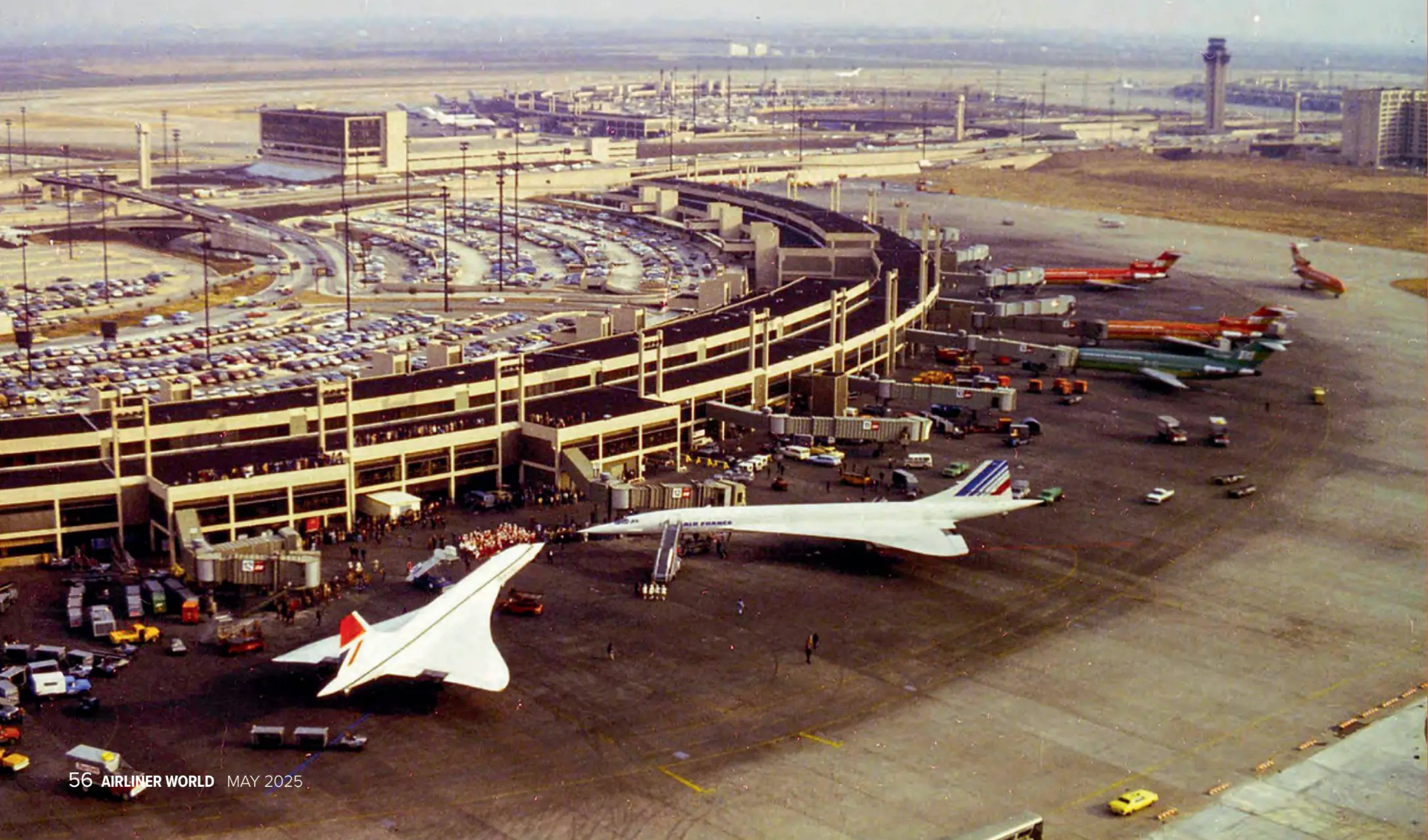
The schedule initially operated five times weekly, with the European flag carriers flying three apiece. Westbound flights were optimised for connections throughout Braniff's DFW hub, while eastbound operations were timed for the interchange to London/Heathrow and Paris/Charles de Gaulle. A 90-minute turn in the US capital was rostered for crew changes, refuelling, catering, and crew transfers between the domestic-only Braniff crews and their European counterparts, who took over on the supersonic trans-Atlantic sorties.

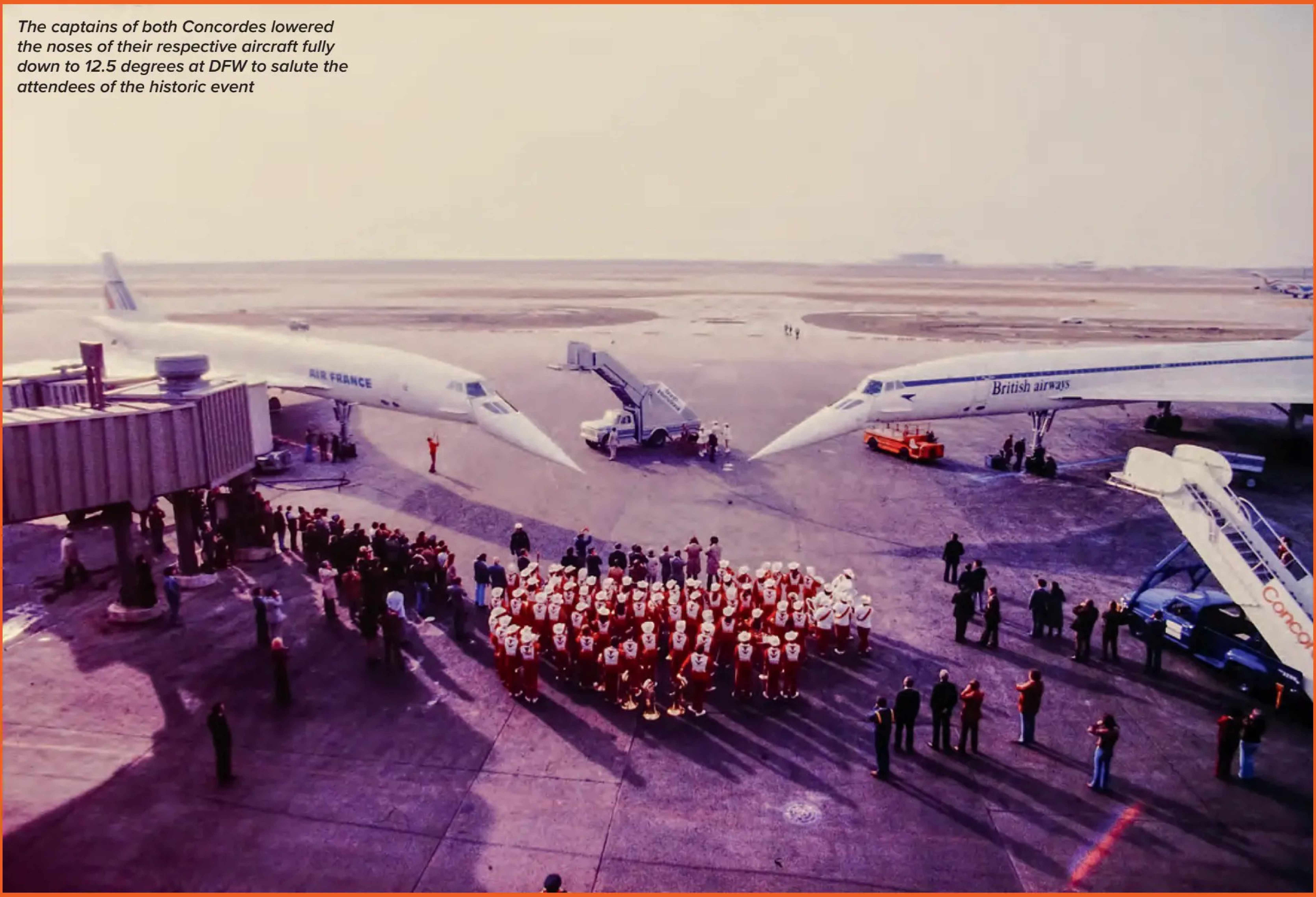
The sonic boom limited Concorde to subsonic .95 Mach speeds overland in the US, though, at FL390 maximum altitude, it sometimes briefly exceeded Mach 1 over the mainland.

While Concorde's speed advantage averaged only 15 to 20 minutes (12%) faster than a Boeing 727 on the same domestic route, its published flight time between DFW and London was two hours and 20 minutes faster than that of the Boeing 747, including the 90-minute stopover.

Because the FAA did not permit non-US aircraft to receive a US

Concordes F-BTSD (c/n 213) and G-BOAE (c/n 212) pictured at Braniff's Terminal 2W at DFW after their dual landing on the first day of operations




The captains of both Concordes lowered the noses of their respective aircraft fully down to 12.5 degrees at DFW to salute the attendees of the historic event

airworthiness certificate, a temporary change in aircraft ownership was required. Accordingly, Concorde's European owners were required to set up corporations in the States. These corporations would then lease the SST to Braniff.

In addition to changing flight crews, US-approved documentation and procedures were mandated on the flight deck, requiring the UK or French documentation to be stowed in the forward lavatory. The aircraft's registration also had to be temporarily altered, with the British "G" or French "F" prefix covered by white tape and a decal with the US "N" prefix followed by the number 94 and two letters.

Competitor criticism

Immediately, industry pundits, notably Braniff competitors, began criticising the service. Low load factors led to the perception that the deal was a money-losing failure, a misconception Cass is determined to correct. The domestic portion of the Concorde interchange could not exceed 20% of the total RPMs of the entire interchange service, which on average was around 20 passengers per flight. However, the company did sell as many seats as possible, although load factors were kept within limits to ensure compliance with the tariff requirements.

High fares on the interchange service were another untruth when they were only priced at a 10-15% premium above the subsonic first-class fares. One-way fares ranged from $154 to $227 (around $698-$1,029 today) throughout the life of the interchange service. These were the cheapest fares ever charged for a scheduled Concorde service.

> **"The sonic boom limited Concorde to subsonic .95 Mach speeds overland in the US, though, at FL390 maximum altitude, it sometimes briefly exceeded Mach 1 over the mainland"**

"There was more local DFW-Washington traffic on there than there was interchange traffic, which also

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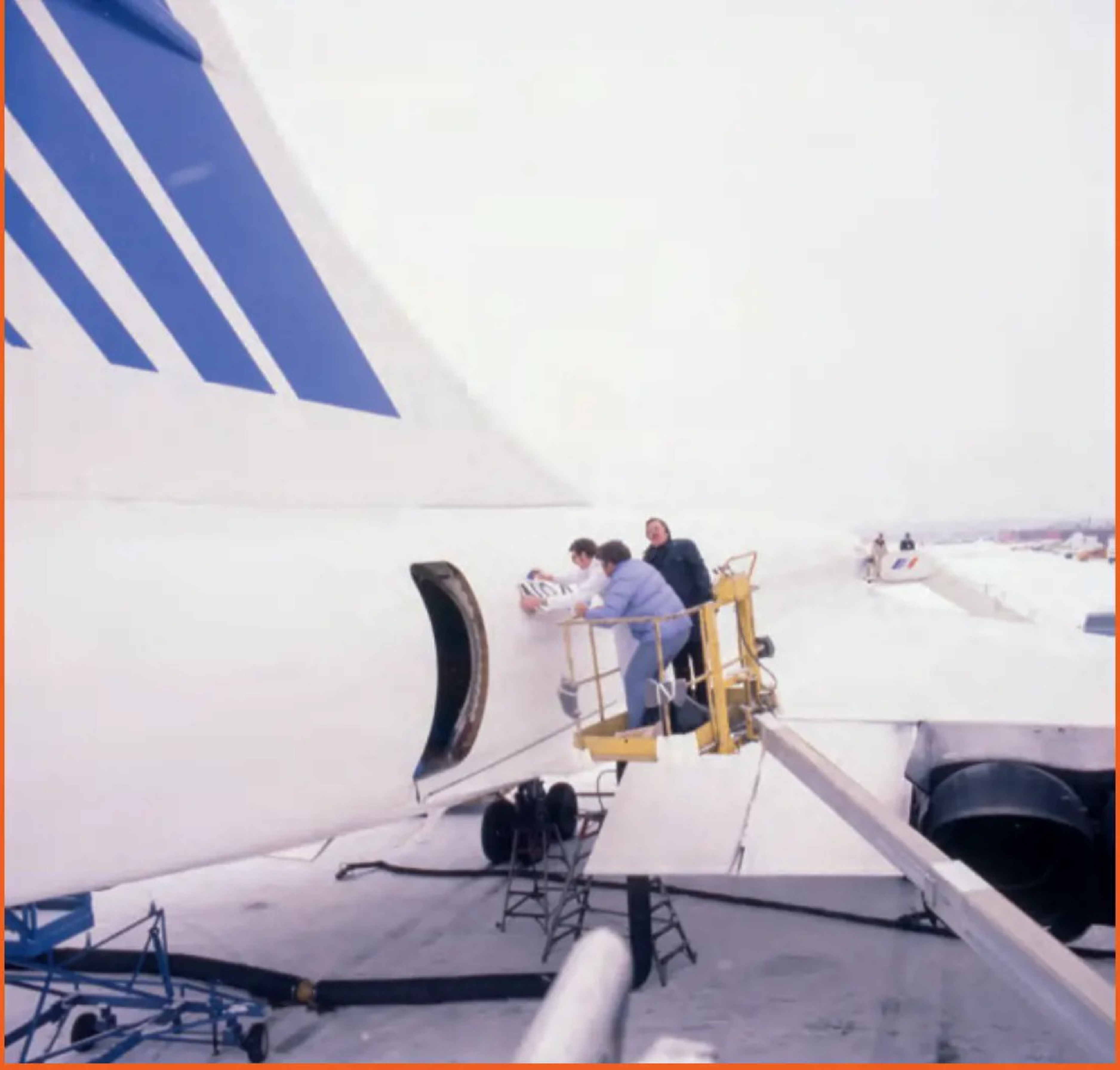
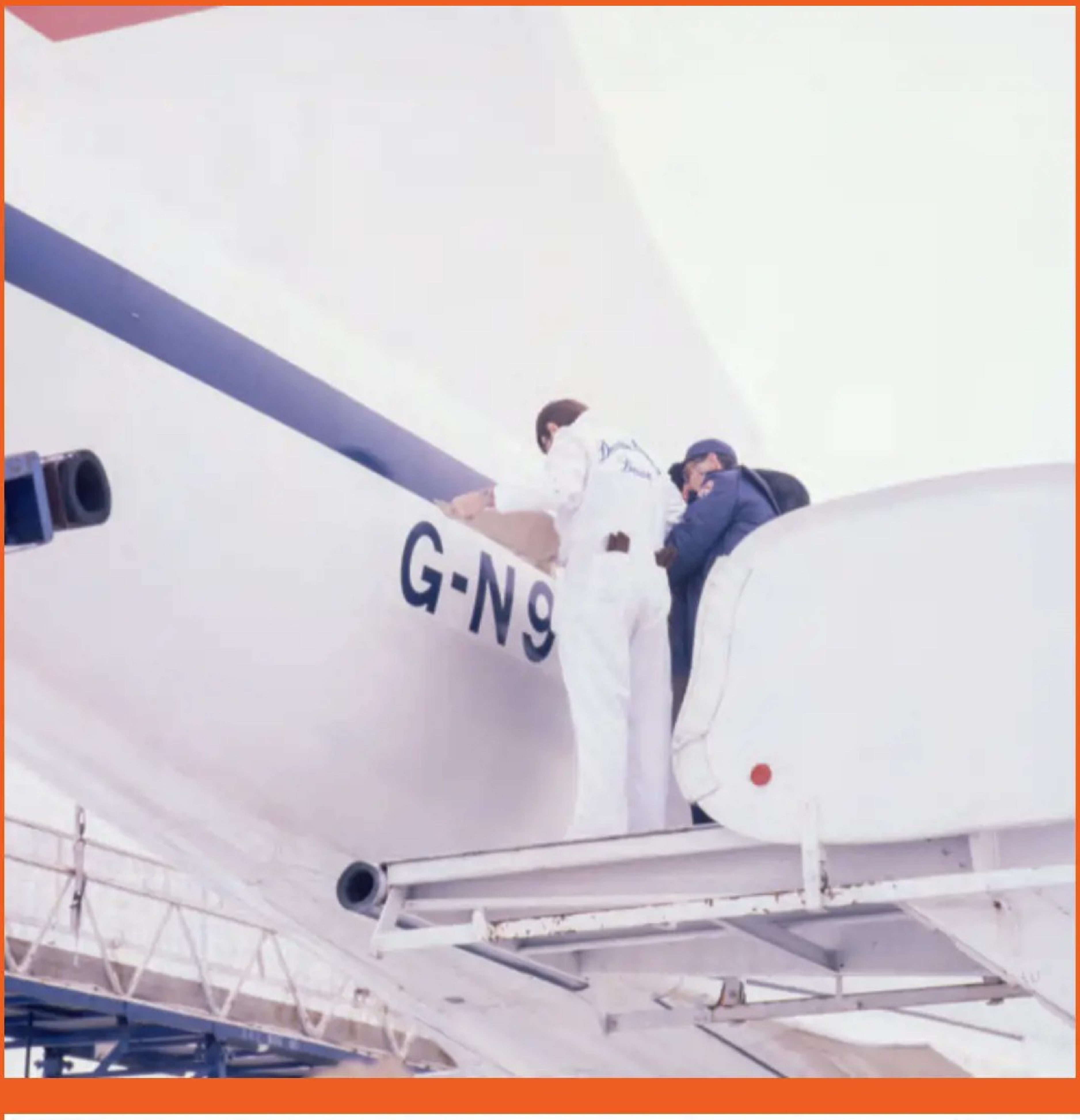
airways
AIR FRANC

BELOW: ***"These new one-stop flights that cut transatlantic flying time in half also have vast public benefits that extend far beyond Dallas/ Fort Worth, London, and Paris," said Lawrence at the time.***



LEFT: *Air France Concorde F-BTSD is reregistered as N94SD, a task undertaken on each US domestic sector, part of the conditions set by the FAA to allow the interchange…*



LEFT: ***While G-BOAE is reregistered as N94AE***

> “Nine months into the deal, they had asked, ‘Can we renegotiate and go up to $2,200 an hour?’ Braniff begrudgingly said yes because it was making a little money on it”

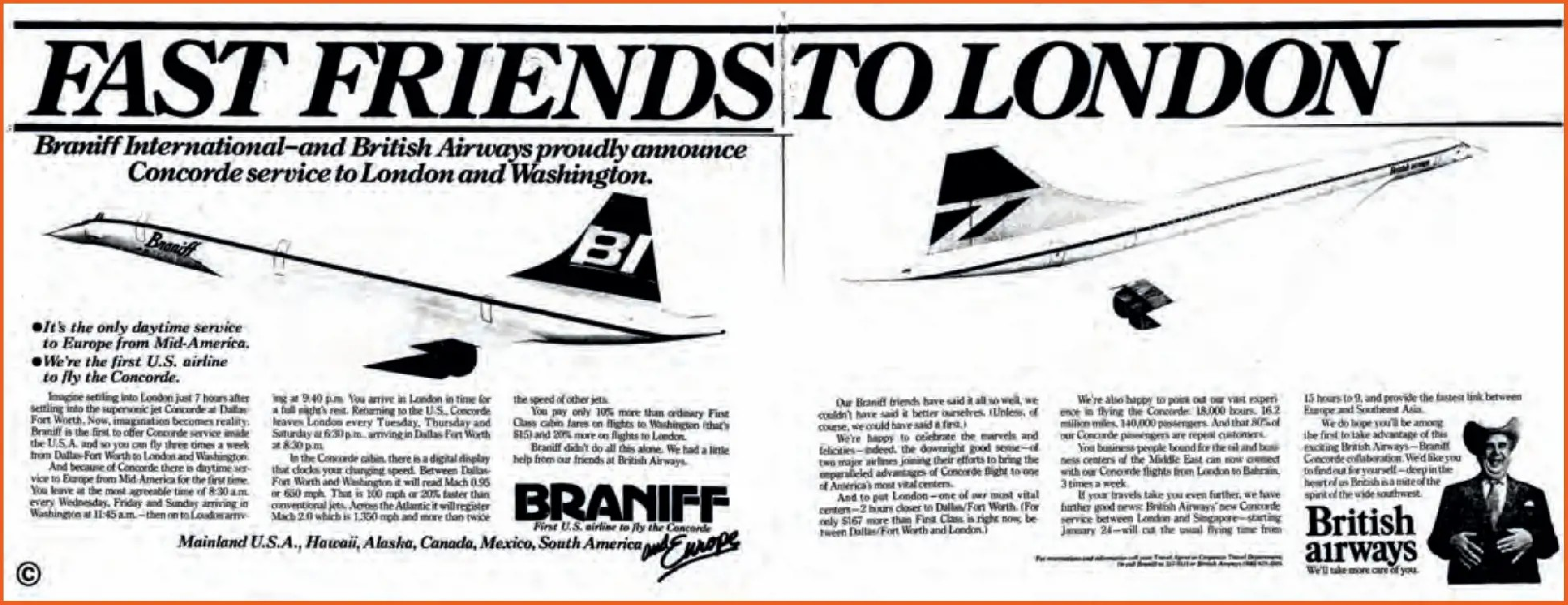
created another problem because there weren’t enough people connecting to feed the interchange and keep the tariff people happy,” said Cass, noting that tariffs negotiations with US authorities carried on long after service ended.

“For the next 18 months, publicity abated, and the interchange settled into a routine normalcy. In June 1979, coincidentally the same year as the movie *‘The Concorde: Airport 1979’*, Braniff nearly suffered a brush with disaster. An unpublicised foreign object debris (FOD) puncture during departure from Washington, eerily similar to the one that would befall Air France Concorde flight 4590 in July 2000. Fortunately, the Braniff flight’s fuel tank was not compromised.”

Supersonic swansong

However, by late 1979, dark clouds were building for Braniff, which was making a nominal profit but still reaping marketing gold. Cass explained that from the outset, the airline had paid just $1,500 per hour for using the supersonic jets, with most maintenance paid for by British Airways and Air France, who were also contractually obliged to reimburse for any losses. Braniff meanwhile, paid for crews and fuel on its segments. However, by this time its European partners were having second thoughts about accumulating losses. “Nine months into the deal, they had asked, ‘Can we renegotiate and go up to $2,200 an hour?’ Braniff begrudgingly said yes

BELOW: *A joint advertisement from British Airways and Braniff promoting the new US domestic Concorde services*



FAST FRIENDS TO LONDON

Braniff International–and British Airways proudly announce Concorde service to London and Washington.

- *It’s the only daytime service to Europe from Mid-America.*
- *We’re the first U.S. airline to fly the Concorde.*

Imagine settling into London just 7 hours after settling into the supersonic jet Concorde at Dallas-Fort Worth. Now, imagination becomes reality. Braniff is the first to offer Concorde service inside the U.S.A. and so you can fly three times a week from Dallas-Fort Worth to London and Washington.

And because of Concorde there is daytime service to Europe from Mid-America for the first time. You leave at the most agreeable time of 8:30 a.m. every Wednesday, Friday and Sunday arriving in Washington at 11:45 a.m.—then on to London arriving at 9:40 p.m. You arrive in London in time for a full night’s rest. Returning to the U.S., Concorde leaves London every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 6:30 p.m., arriving in Dallas-Fort Worth at 8:30 p.m.

In the Concorde cabin, there is a digital display that clocks your changing speed. Between Dallas-Fort Worth and Washington it will read Mach 0.95 or 650 mph. That is 100 mph or 20% faster than conventional jets. Across the Atlantic it will register Mach 2.0 which is 1,350 mph and more than twice the speed of other jets.

You pay only 10% more than ordinary First Class cabin fares on flights to Washington (that’s $15) and 20% more on flights to London.

Braniff didn’t do all this alone. We had a little help from our friends at British Airways.

BRANIFF

First U.S. airline to fly the Concorde

Mainland U.S.A., Hawaii, Alaska, Canada, Mexico, South America and Europe

©

Our Braniff friends have said it all so well, we couldn’t have said it better ourselves. (Unless, of course, we could have said it first.)

We’re happy to celebrate the marvels and felicities—indeed, the downright good sense—of two major airlines joining their efforts to bring the unparalleled advantages of Concorde flight to one of America’s most vital centers.

And to put London—one of our most vital centers—2 hours closer to Dallas/Fort Worth. (For only $167 more than First Class is right now, between Dallas/Fort Worth and London.)

We’re also happy to point out our vast experience in flying the Concorde: 18,000 hours, 16.2 million miles, 140,000 passengers. And that 80% of our Concorde passengers are repeat customers.

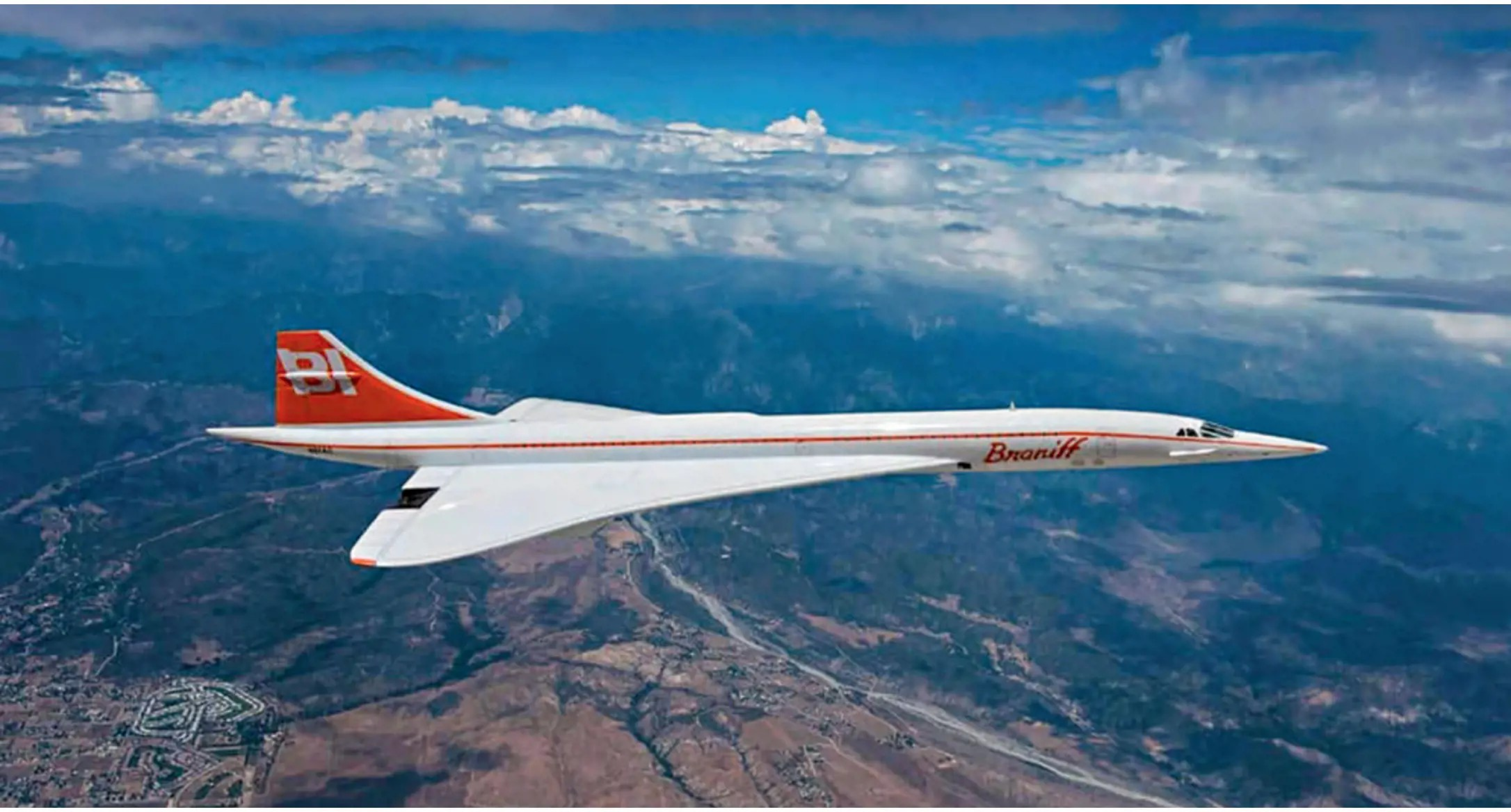
You business people bound for the oil and business centers of the Middle East can now connect with our Concorde flights from London to Bahrain, 3 times a week.

If your travels take you even further, we have further good news: British Airways’ new Concorde service between London and Singapore—starting January 24—will cut the usual flying time from 15 hours to 9, and provide the fastest link between Europe and Southeast Asia.

We do hope you’ll be among the first to take advantage of this exciting British Airways—Braniff Concorde collaboration. We’d like you to find out for yourself—deep in the heart of us British is a mite of the spirit of the wide southwest.

British airways

We’ll take more care of you.



ABOVE: ***In April 1980, one of BA's Concordes was scheduled to have the Braniff livery applied to one side of its fuselage. Sadly, due to ongoing financial woes for the latter, the re-paint never took place, and the Braniff livery on Concorde only ever appeared in promotional material***

because it was making a little money on it," Cass revealed. Braniff approved the increase, but the unforeseen and historic rise in fuel costs caused immediate problems, causing the entire interchange operation to become unprofitable.

In April 1980, one of British Airways' Concordes was due to enter the hangar to have one side of its fuselage painted in Braniff's colours, previously only seen in promotional materials. By this time, the industry's fortunes dramatically turned for the worse as fuel prices rose by 92% and a recession hit. Competitive pressure for Braniff came from a growing American Airlines across its network. Load factors dropped to 5.5% from a 59% average in the fourth quarter of 1979, and Braniff reported a $44m loss for the year, its first since 1970. Ultimately, Air France and British Airways chose to pull the plug. On May 31, 1980, Braniff's 360th and final Concorde flight departed for the last time, ending a brief but fascinating chapter in aviation history.

Concorde's prestige is never in doubt, but measuring its commercial success has always been difficult. Cass said Concorde did exactly what Lawrence had envisioned: "It was a marketing stunt that drew massive attention to Braniff. That's all it was. It also kept the Boeing 747s flying from both Dallas/Fort Worth and Boston to London, Paris, Frankfurt, Amsterdam and Brussels full." Additionally, DFW was the only US airport outside New York/JFK, Washington/Dulles and Miami, and one of only eight in the world, that could boast scheduled Concorde flights.

The learnings from the Braniff Concorde interchange experiment ultimately led directly to the product's upmarket repositioning as an ultra-luxury travel experience. By making the service more premium, making fares more expensive, and adjusting the marketing from an "everyman experience", Concorde became profitable for British Airways on a pro-forma basis in the 1990s.

In the last few months before the retirement of Concorde in October 2003, BA flew a special flight out of New York/JFK to honour Braniff's Concorde crews, with some aboard the jet for the first time since 1980. Cass wistfully recalls: "Lawrence always told me, 'One of my biggest disappointments is that even with all the technology and all of our ability, we could never get a successful and money-making supersonic transport.'"

In part two, Airliner World *will feature the story of one of the two living former Braniff Concorde pilots, captain John Baganz, on his incredible story of piloting the magnificent aircraft.* AW

The author is grateful to Ben Cass and Collin Ice of Braniff Airways, and www.heritageconcorde.com for their invaluable contributions to this story.

RIGHT: ***Despite Lawrence's high hopes for Braniff's Concorde services, the airline's precarious financial position led the service to be pulled by Air France and British Airways, with the last flight operating on May 31, 1980***

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FEATURE

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BRITISH OVERSEAS TERRITORY

airports of the world

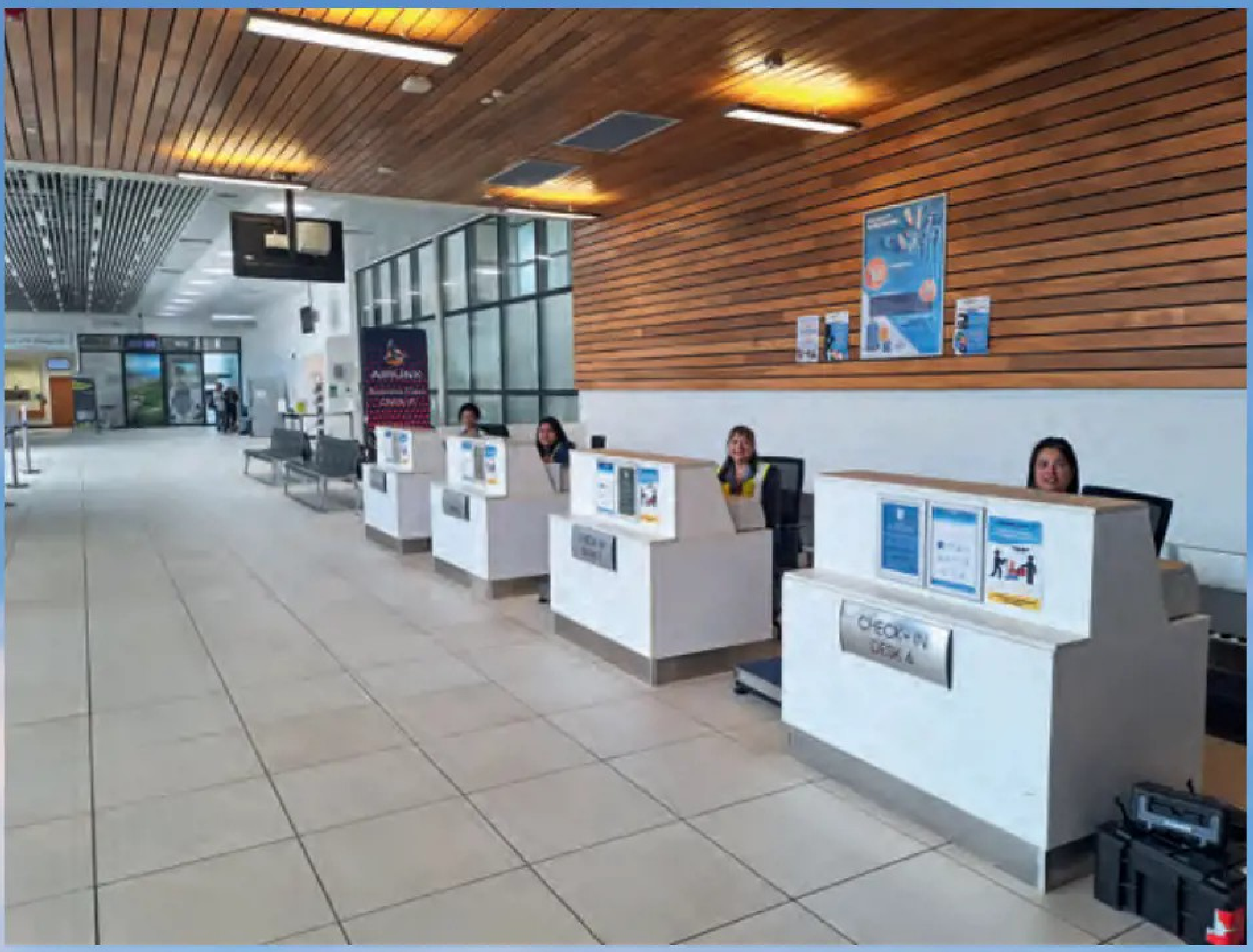
Saint Helena's airlink

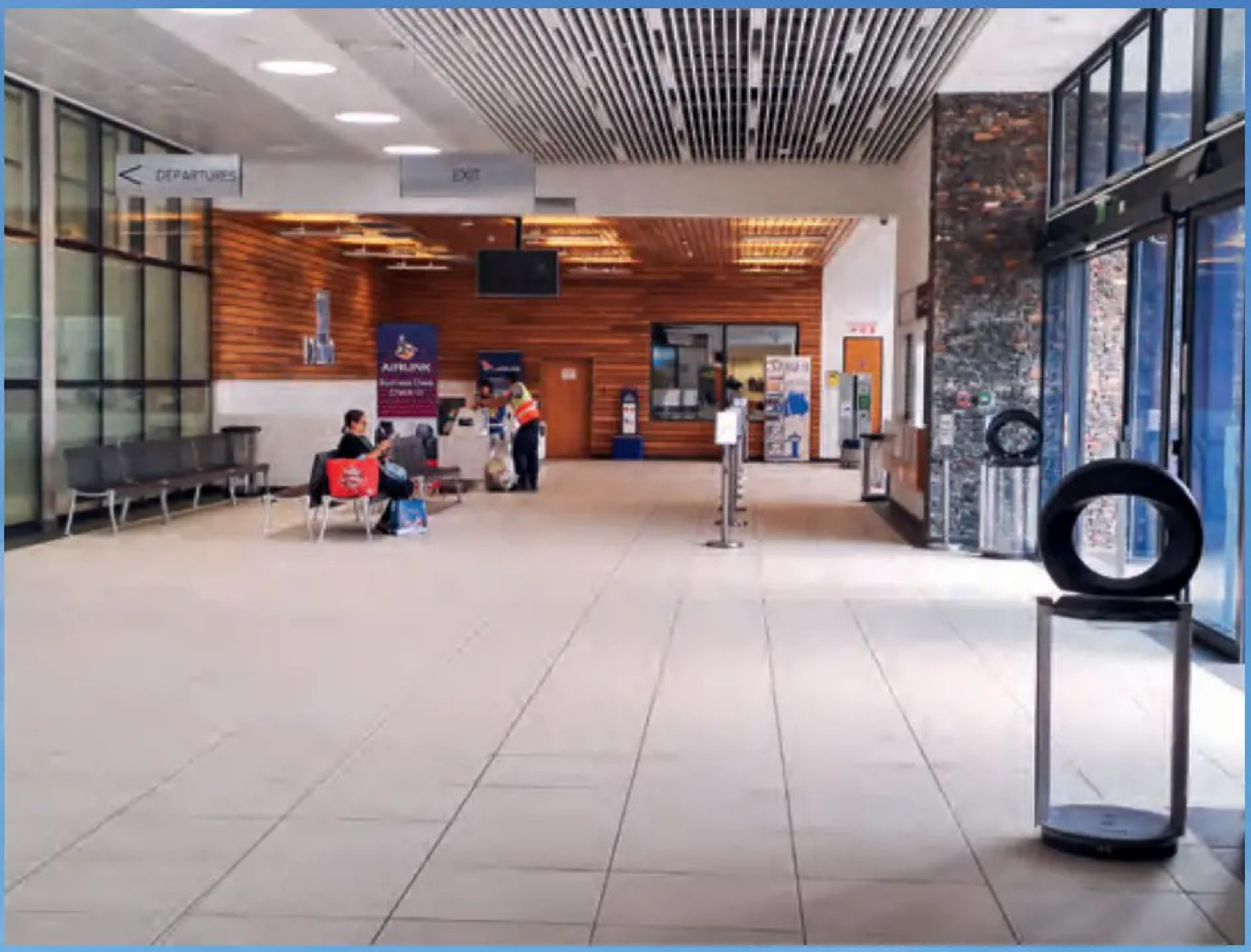
Matteo Legnani heads west from South Africa on an E190, to visit the remote island territory of Saint Helena and learn more about its airport operation

BWLOW: *Saint Helena International Airport is located atop 1,000ft cliffs, with part of its 6,400ft runway built on a vast embankment* ALAMY.COM/CRAIG HALLEWELL

It is extremely difficult to name an inhabited and civilised place on earth where air travel arrived on a later date than at Saint Helena. The island is one of the most isolated places on the planet, as its location in the South Atlantic ocean is some 2,000 miles west of the Namibian coast, and 2,800 miles east of the shores of Brazil. Until 2017, the only way to reach it was by boat and the journey aboard RMS *Saint Helena* to Cape Town in South Africa, took six days. Eight years ago, everything changed for the British Overseas Territory, which is most famous as the place where French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte was exiled (and died in 1821) and is home to a little less than 4,000 British citizens.

Close to the eastern edge of the island, atop 1,000ft hight cliffs with part of its 6,400ft long runway 01/19 built on a vast embankment, sits Saint Helena International Airport, which has cut the journey time to South Africa to a mere 4½ hours. Scheduled commercial services began on October 14, 2017, when South African carrier Airlink inaugurated a weekly service from Johannesburg/OR Tambo International Airport, via Walvis Bay Airport on the western shores of





ABOVE: ***There are four check-in desks at Saint Helena International*** ALL IMAGES BY MATTEO LEGNANI UNLESSS OTHERWISE STATED

RIGHT: ***The compact terminal opens its doors for a few hours once or twice a week***

Namibia, using an Embraer E190. That first flight ended a 'journey' initiated in 2011, when South African engineering group Basil Read was awarded a design and construction contract worth £202m by the UK government.

Early days

Construction work had begun in early 2012 and the first large passenger jet touched down on April 18, 2016, a Comair Boeing 737-800, ZS-ZWG (c/n 40972), leased from British Airways. It was an implementation flight to test the route, ground operations and handling, ahead of the commencement of scheduled services. However, the landing was not straightforward and after a planned go-around on the first approach, there was a second unplanned go-around, with the aircraft successfully landing at the third attempt. Eight days later on April 26, 2016, the St Helena government announced a delay to the airport opening because of concerns regarding wind shear, after the problematic landing of the Comair flight.

In December 2016, the island government issued a tender for an airline to establish a scheduled

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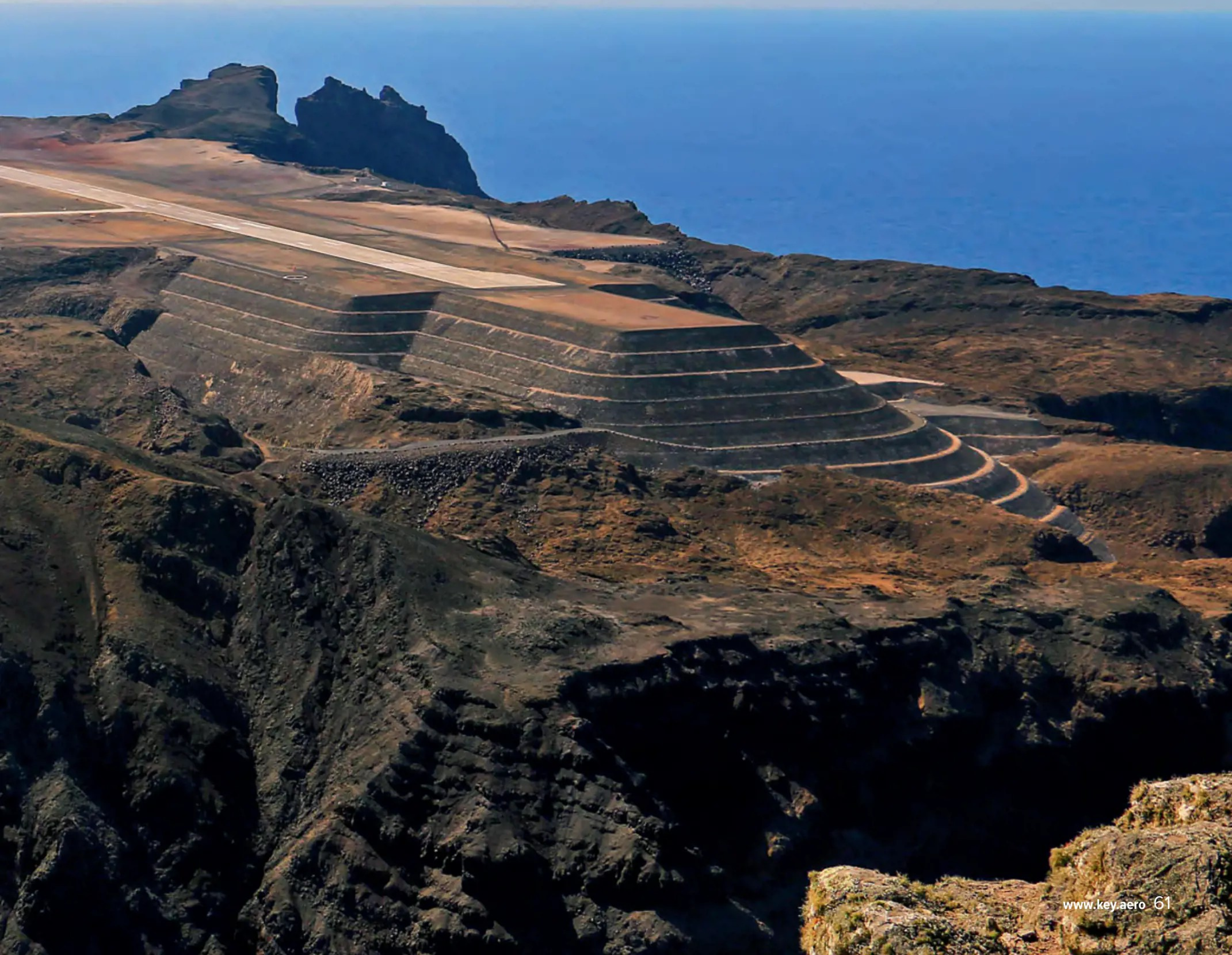


BRITISH AIRWAYS
ZS-ZWG

ABOVE: ***Comair Boeing 737-800, ZS-ZWG (c/n 40972), performing a go-around during the route testing implementation flight on April 18, 2016*** ALAMY.COM/MEDIA DRUM WORLD

commercial service. On June 9, 2017, Airlink won the bid and announced it would operate weekly flights to Johannesburg via Windhoek in Namibia. There would also be a monthly link to another UK Overseas Territory, Ascension Island, some two hours flying time northwest of Saint Helena. Initially, the airline could sell a maximum 76 of the 98 seats available on its E190s departing Johannesburg, due to runway limitations related to Saint Helena's wind shear issues. Since April 2019 Airlink has refuelled in Walvis Bay, boosting its capacity to 98 passengers because of the shorter distance between the Namibian airport and the island. Plans for a service to the UK were also evaluated, with a connection to London/Gatwick via Accra in Ghana proposed, but, due to the high costs, the idea was abandoned. The official opening of the facility took place on January 26, 2024, when Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh, unveiled a plaque, and the island celebrated with a public holiday.

Flight operations

Airlink E190 passenger services from Johannesburg to Saint Helena operate under a strict safety protocol, due to the long over-water leg and challenging weather conditions at the destination. Of the 374 pilots rostered by Airlink, an elite group of ten captains

Passengers disembarking from the inaugural flight on Airlink Embraer E190, ZS-YAB (c/n 19000195), on October 14, 2017 GIANLUIGI GUERCIA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

AIRLINK
flyairlink.com
ZS- YAB

ABOVE: ***Approaching Saint Helena after 2,000 miles over water from Africa***

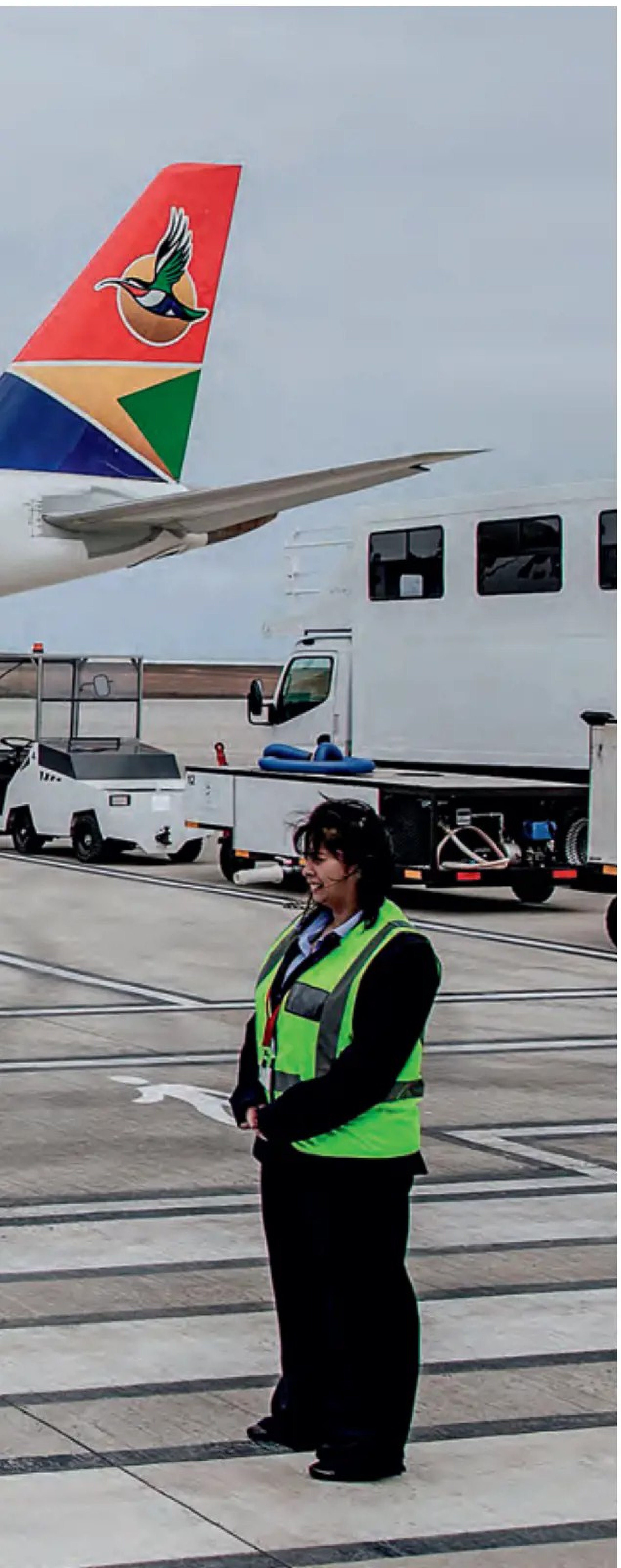
ABOVE RIGHT: ***Arriving passengers walk from the aircraft to the Saint Helena Airport terminal***

(including chief pilot, Jaco Henning) are certified to land on the challenging 'rock' of Saint Helena, with just two aircraft typically used, if available. These E190s are the only aircraft in the fleet equipped with Satcom technology, allowing flight controllers to track their position throughout their Atlantic crossings to and from the island.

The block time from Johannesburg is 6hrs and 35mins, which includes the refuelling stop at Walvis Bay on the Namibian coast, which can be omitted when passenger numbers are low or strong tailwinds are present. On the day *Airliner World* flew the route, a light load and favourable winds meant we did not land and refuel in Walvis Bay, and the total flying time was a much shorter at 4hrs 30 mins. However, in both scenarios, the aircraft cannot be fully fuelled because carrying the maximum weight of fuel would make landing on Saint Helena's short runway too risky. Consequently, the weather conditions along the flight path and at the destination are constantly monitored, with pilots receiving updates as frequently as every 15 minutes during the over-water section of the flight. Once the aircraft passes the 'decision point' (approximately halfway) it is committed to landing on the island, because the remaining fuel level is insufficient to return to Walvis Bay or to reach Ascension Island the nearest alternative airport.

In conversation with *Airliner World*, chief pilot Jaco Jennings confirmed: "There are several decision points involved, starting before we even dispatch from Johannesburg or Cape Town. The weather is then reassessed before the departure from Walvis Bay and once again before entering extended range operations. If the weather deteriorates after this, the final decision to continue or turn back »

> "Construction work had begun in early 2012 and the first large passenger jet touched down on April 18, 2016"



BELOW: ***The author at the baggage carousel, looking back at Airlink Embraer E190, ZS-YAJ (c/n 19000755)***

“The most memorable flights are when the weather is good and you are presented with a stunning view of the island, jutting out in the middle of the vast ocean”

is made at a point called the ‘equal time point’, which is where the time to continue to Saint Helena or return to Walvis is equal.” Jennings went on to say: “The most eventful flights are usually related to the extreme wind shear and turbulence that is often present, which can result in several landing attempts. But the most memorable flights are when the weather is good and you are presented with a stunning view of the island, jutting out in the middle of the vast ocean.”

At the Airlink Operations Centre at Johannesburg/OR Tambo, Russell Ellis, senior operations control manager, explained: “Safe operations into Saint Helena require crosswinds not exceeding 55kts and clouds not lower than 782ft during final approach and landing. If the weather conditions at the destination are adverse, we delay the flight for as long as possible during daylight hours (since night landings are prohibited) or reschedule it for the following day.”

In October 2023, a flight from Johannesburg was delayed for an entire week because of weather disruptions. On each of those seven days, crew and passengers reported to the airport every morning only to be bussed back to an airport hotel later in the day, until the weather improved sufficiently to enable departure. In 2024, 13 flights from Johannesburg had to be rescheduled, and two flights were forced to turn back to Johannesburg/OR Tambo after reaching the decision point, because rapidly changing weather conditions over Saint Helena made landing impossible.

Airport operations

The island is a place where the arrival of the weekly flight from Johannesburg, and the summer season weekly flight from Cape Town is still an event, as Tavonga Chikwenhere, Saint Helena airport business manager, revealed: “Apart from friends and relatives meeting their loved ones after arrival, or before departure, we have islanders who regularly come here just to enjoy the excitement of operations in full swing.”

ABOVE: *The view of the apron from the top of the air traffic control tower*

BELOW: *Airlink Embraer E190, ZS-YAD (c/n 19000746) at the end of runway 01, ready to depart for Cape Town in South Africa*

The two-storey terminal offers a compact 38,000sq ft of floor space and opens its doors for a few hours once or twice a week, depending on the number of flights from South Africa. Landside, it features four check-in desks (one dedicated to business class), a ticketing office, bank counter, small souvenir shop, and one security gate on the ground floor, plus a restaurant and a viewing terrace on the upper floor. Airside facilities and amenities include a small business class lounge, another souvenir shop, a bar, and two boarding gates. In arrivals there is a solitary baggage carousel and four immigration booths, plus a statue of Napoleon Bonaparte to welcome visitors. On non-flight days the air traffic control (ATC) tower is shut, and the facility is closed to the public, although some 30 permanent staff remain in service and include firefighters who use the opportunity for training.

After the author was given access to the 42ft high control tower, Bramwell Lumukwana, air traffic controller said: “In case of emergency (eg an aircraft forced to divert to the island), pilots

AIRLINK
flyairlink.com
ZS-YAD

ABOVE: ***The terminal building from the window of an Airlink Embraer in October 2017*** GETTY IMAGES/ LEON NEAL

can activate the runway lights and the emergency personnel and procedures at the airport from the cockpit by switching to frequency 119.5 on the radio." He explained that Saint Helena ATC is in charge of inbound aircraft below 20,000ft: "Until then, they are under the responsibility of Luanda Oceanic Airspace, although we exchange WhatsApp messages with weather data and even photos with the pilots well before they come under our 'umbrella', particularly when atmospheric conditions are challenging."

Lumukwana pointed out what he called: "the most important instrument available in the tower. It's called LIDAR (laser imaging detection and ranging) and uses a 'seam' to detect eventual wind shear strength, altitude and position while the aircraft is in its final phase of the approach". With the skies meticulously checked for a safe landing, the same happens on the ground. "Half an hour before each arrival, the runway is inspected by a crew aboard a vehicle to look for debris or rocks brought by the winds and an apron inspection is conducted by personnel walking around it," Lumukwana stated.

Ground operations

On 'flight days' permanent employees are joined by some of the 15-20 contracted staff – people like Anne, who manages human resources at a local employer, but once or twice a week checks-in passengers and their luggage. Anne and her colleagues have been trained by Airlink in Johannesburg, and other contracted staff tasks include security, immigration, boarding procedures, ramp and cargo handling, and aircraft cleaning. For people used to large airports, it's quite an amazing experience to watch the small terminal become crowded in the hour preceding arrivals. An hour after arriving passengers have been processed it reverts to absolute quietness, where the only noise comes from the swishing sound of the broom being used to sweep the floor.

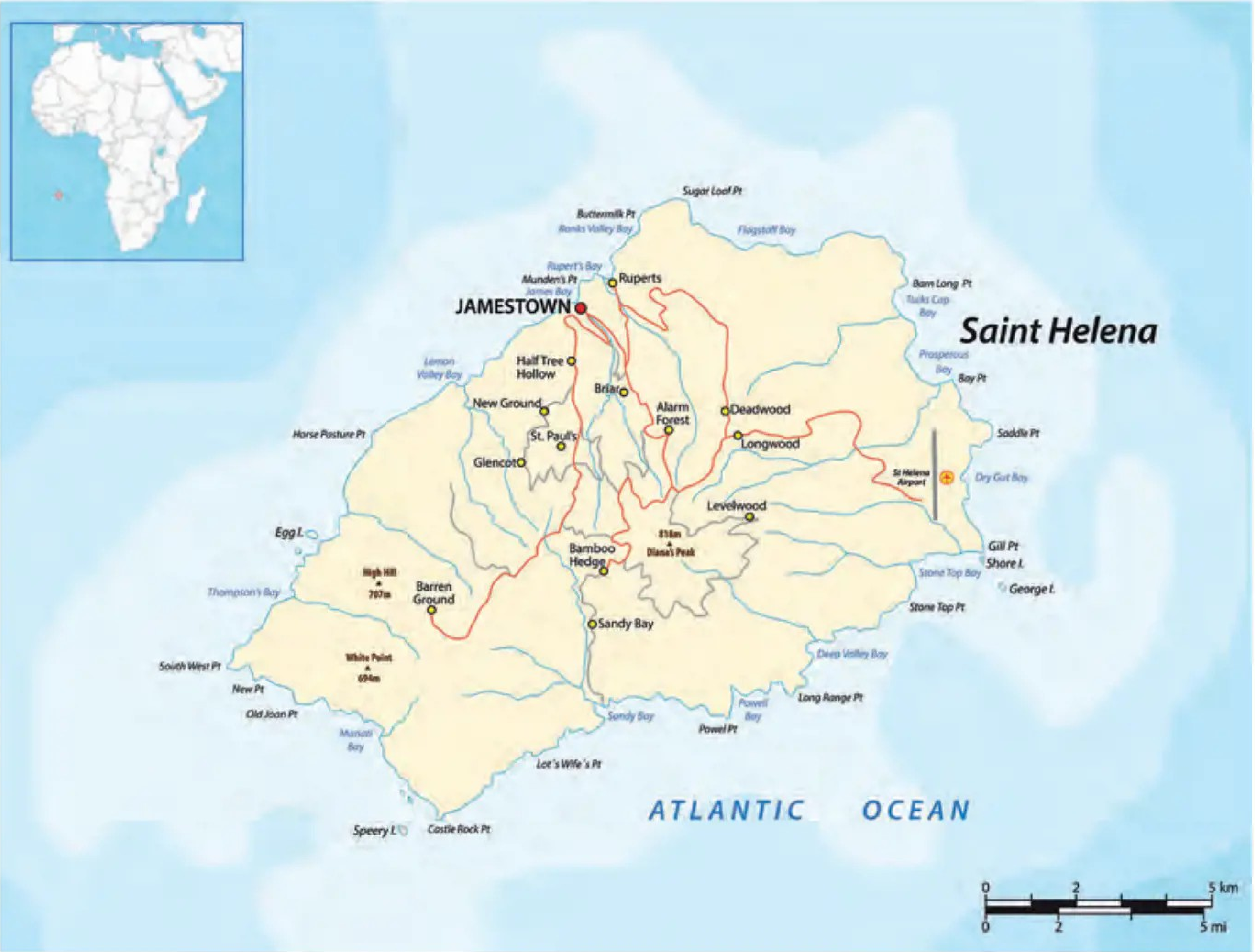
Since the airport opened, Gwyneth Howell has been in charge of all airport operations. She had previously joined the Saint Helena project in 2015 as aviation safety specialist, certifying the ATC tower in 2016, and since 2018 she has been CEO and accountable manager and executive director at the airport. Considered a legend in South African civil aviation, Howell became the first female manager in the air traffic service in 1999. Later in 2025, following a 46-year career, she will retire and move back to South Africa after a decade on the island: "To think of an airport here ten years ago was crazy – and to build and make it fully operational, very challenging. It is something that changed forever the island and the lives of its residents, because it opened Saint Helena to the world. We also managed to have a year-round operating airline, with Cape Town adding to Johannesburg this year for the first time after the COVID-19 pandemic."

With just one or two flights each week, passenger figures remain modest, and traffic is yet to fully recover from the pandemic period. In 2019, the airport welcomed 9,462 travellers, but was effectively closed for most of 2020, 2021 and 2022, until the island government lifted pandemic restrictions in August 2022. The first two fully operational years of 2023 and 2024 witnessed 7,906 and 8,012 passengers respectively.

The largest aircraft to use the airport has been a Titan Airways Boeing 757 on a charter flight and Howell admitted that currently there is no foreseeable traffic growth: "The quite short runway we have does not allow the use of large aircraft. Also, flying here is very expensive, to the point that Airlink's Johannesburg and Cape Town services are government funded. In past years we made a lot of research about new destinations and even considered services to Europe, but the costs on the airlines made this project unviable."

Saint Helena remains a gem full of historical and natural treasures yet to be discovered by the masses – an island where large-scale tourism is unlikely to ever arrive. But when visitors do come, it won't take six days anymore, now it's just a four and a half hour hop from Africa. AW

BELOW: ***Located in the middle of the South Atlantic, Saint Helena is one of the most isolated communities on the planet*** ALAMY. COM/RAINER LESNIEWSKI


Saint Helena
JAMESTOWN
Sugar Loaf Pt
Buttermilk Pt
Banks Valley Bay
Flagstaff Bay
Rupert's Bay
Munden's Pt
James Bay
Ruperts
Barn Long Pt
Turks Cap Bay
Prosperous Bay
Bay Pt
Lemon Valley Bay
Half Tree Hollow
Briars
New Ground
Alarm Forest
Deadwood
Longwood
Horse Pasture Pt
St. Paul's
Glencot
Saddle Pt
St Helena Airport
Dry Gut Bay
Levelwood
Egg I.
818m
Diana's Peak
Bamboo Hedge
Gill Pt
Shore I.
George I.
Stone Top Bay
Stone Top Pt
High Hill
797m
Barren Ground
Thompson's Bay
Sandy Bay
White Point
694m
South West Pt
New Pt
Old Joan Pt
Deep Valley Bay
Long Range Pt
Manati Bay
Sandy Bay
Powell Bay
Powel Pt
Lot's Wife's Pt
Speery I.
Castle Rock Pt
ATLANTIC OCEAN
0
2
5 km
0
2
5 mi

Island vibes with BERMUDAIR

Chris Sloan ventures to Bermuda to be charmed by the territory's first commercial airline, which operates to North America and plans to extend further afield

VQ-BLU
APRON

ABOVE: ***BermudAir* Embraer E175, VQ-BLU (c/n 170000344), Topsey** ***ready to go at dawn*** BERMUDAIR

In just 21 square miles there is a year-round population of approximately 64,600 people: Bermuda is a tiny British Overseas Territory. Yet the isolated North Atlantic archipelago – located 3,000 miles southwest of London and 650 miles east of North Carolina on the US mainland – punches way above its weight in global profile. Though world-renowned for its natural subtropical beauty and as a high-end tourist destination, 85% of its GDP is driven by off-shore international business – not dissimilar to the Cayman Islands. It has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world and many wealthy people have second homes here, some of whom arrive and depart on private jets.

An odyssey begins

Bermuda's sparkling new LF Wade International Airport terminal appears well served by North American carriers. American Airlines has long enjoyed the highest market share, but Air Canada, Delta Air Lines, JetBlue and United Airlines also operate year-round. British Airways has the monopoly on nonstop connectivity to London, while Azores Airlines offers a seasonal link to Ponta Delgada.

Yet Adam Scott, a former investment banker, spotted a gap in the market: "There was a screaming opportunity here for the airlift that the island requires on a year-round basis to put the right sized aircraft into the market." The genesis of BermudAir, the archipelago's first airline, has been an odyssey in itself. In the early 2000s, while working at Goldman Sachs, Scott devised the concept of locating a premium nonstop service from a convenient airport in the heart of London's financial district – London/City. Named Odyssey Airlines, it planned to operate an all-business class configured Airbus A318 or what

5
LU
BERMUDAIR
Topsey

was then the Bombardier CSeries, now known as the A220. The business plan attracted a significant amount of attention and enthusiasm from investors, and the airline was set up in 2010. There was some particularly unwanted attention from British Airways, which launched its A318 business service to New York/JFK in September 2009. After more than a decade of development, Scott claims Odyssey came close to funding on multiple occasions. Other events beyond its control also impeded the launch, including COVID-19, the near bankruptcy of Bombardier and war in Ukraine. With a laugh and some gallows humour, Scott remarked: "The biggest mistake I made with Odyssey is that I didn't read Homer about his painful voyage."

After the disappointing experience, Scott began spending time in Bermuda, where he noticed a wealthy population and a neglected business market that travels year-round and expects a premium level of service. Bermuda's seasonal services peak in the summer, but fall away in autumn and winter with seat capacity dipping by 50% or more, according to Cirium, severely reducing connectivity. A niche in the market was spotted by Scott and BermudAir co-founder, George Henderson. The pair planned a Bermudian all-business premium airline using an Embraer E175 fitted with just 30 bespoke first-of-their-kind "Aisle Class" mini-suites. Supply chain issues delayed the seats and caused the business model to pivot again. This problem turned out to be fortuitous, explained Scott: "It forced us to appreciate the real market opportunity to provide a great experience to everybody. So, we now do business and economy."

Bermuda has traditionally been served by aircraft with a capacity of around 150 passengers, or more in the case of BA's Boeing 777s to London. As with Odyssey, Scott chose the smaller gauge »

Topsey
BERMUD

> “The genesis of BermudAir, the archipelago’s first airline, has been an odyssey in itself”

LEFT: ***The Primeclass Lounge in the US departures area*** CHRIS SLOAN

RIGHT: ***Welcome to Bermuda – “every time somebody comes here, they love this place”*** BERMUDAIR

route, and leased two ten-year-old former Flybe E175s from Azorra Aviation. Embraers and A220s dominate the skies at London/City, but have never regularly operated across the ocean on scheduled services to Bermuda. It was an unusual choice to fly essentially exclusively transoceanic sectors, but the contrarian Scott believes it’s the ideal aircraft. “You can’t justify throwing on a 737 or A320, but you still need an aircraft that’s comfortable, gives people that feeling of space, and one that doesn’t look regional.” The two 88-seat aircraft, VQ-BLU (c/n 170000344) and VQ-BLW (c/n 17000351), were named *Topsey* and *Willy*, respectively, after Scott’s parents’ nicknames.

Famed aviation brand architect Paul Wylde, who counts Copa Airlines, Delta, Hawaiian and JetBlue as clients, was commissioned to design the new brand, which includes hundreds of touchpoints inspired by the vibrancy of the island’s colourful architecture coupled with its flora and fauna.

Network and service

Network planning is both tactical and strategic, noted Scott: “All of the airports serve a different purpose.” New York may be the Bermuda’s number one market, but Westchester County is a convenient secondary airport in an affluent area. More than just Disney, Orlando is a popular shopping and customer support business destination. Baltimore’s Johns Hopkins Medical Center has significant medical traffic, while Hartford has insurance industry connections and Fort Lauderdale is a year-round alternative to Miami, where American Airlines sharply reduces its off-season frequencies.

Boston/Logan, Westchester County, and Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood were the first three destinations for the fledgling airline. With the addition of Orlando, Baltimore/Washington, Toronto/Pearson, Halifax/Stanfield,

Aviation brand architect Paul Wylde was inspired by the vibrancy of the island's colourful architecture coupled with its flora and fauna BERMUDAIR

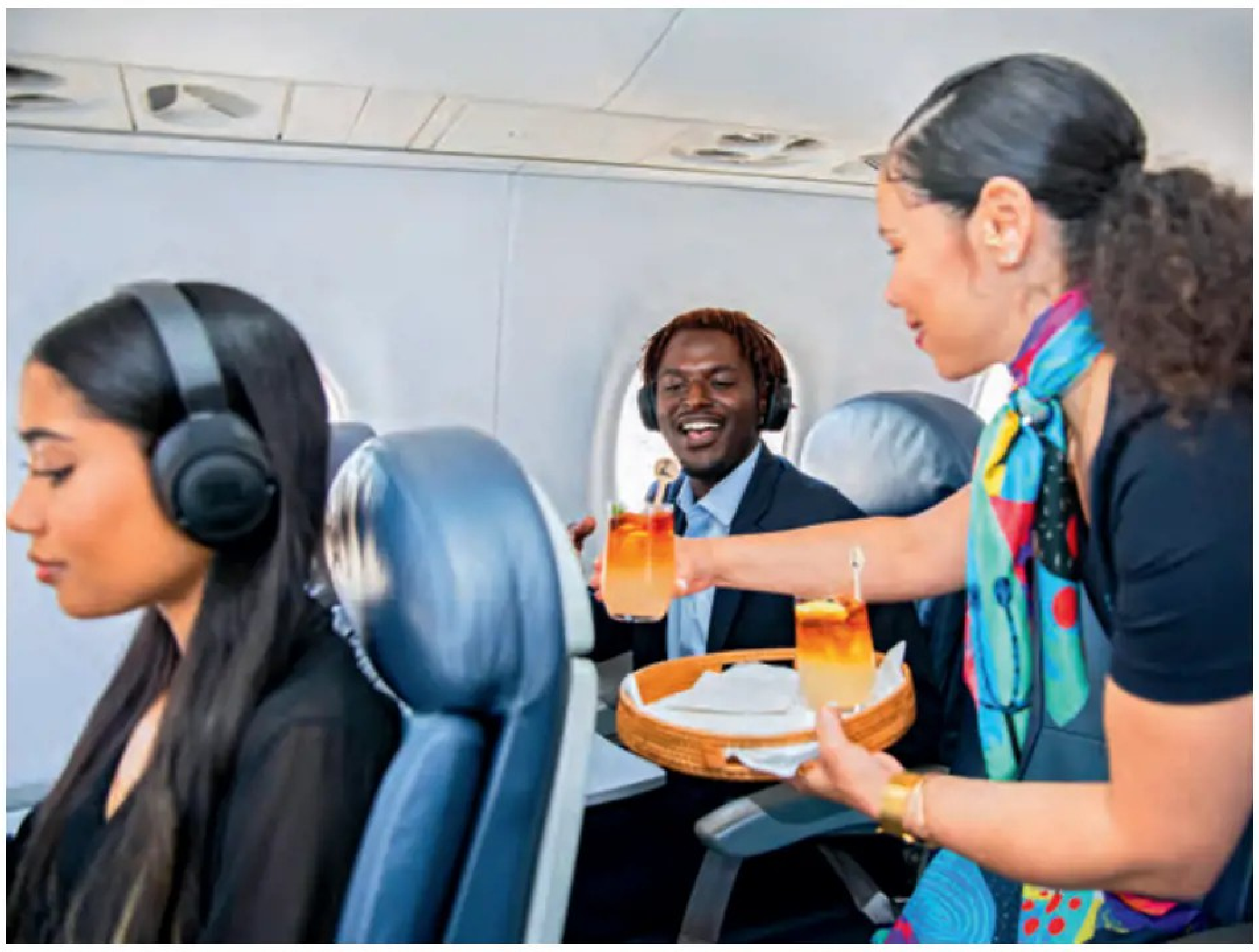
Hartford, Raleigh-Durham and Charleston, this has now increased to ten destinations in the US and Canada. In May and June this year, Providence, Richmond and Montreal/Trudeau will join the mix. Only the routes to Toronto and Boston face direct competition, from Air Canada Rouge and JetBlue, respectively, but as Scott said: "What differentiates us is that we are a year-round player, and our product."

In contrast to its rivals, BermudAir proffers an elevated level of service in both cabins that feels simpatico with its archipelago home. The E175s' two-two configuration boast a decidedly "non-regional jet" 32in of pitch in economy and 34in in business, with rich coral blue leather seats, echoing the island chain's seas. The detail is meticulous in the impeccably clean cabin and a clever, locally inspired touch is the in-flight LED mood lighting that mirrors the bus stop poles on the island, bathing the cabins in shades of pink when travelling towards Bermuda, and in calm blues when heading towards North America.

All passengers can enjoy a free streaming inflight entertainment bring-your-own-device solution from AirFi, offering a robust catalogue of TV shows and film, plus free text messaging. The crew serve delicious locally produced cookies and, unusually, complimentary alcoholic drinks such as the national beverage – Goslings Dark 'n Stormy rum. What the soft product lacks in all classes is even more surprising, said Scott: "I hate plastic, so we have real glasses and mugs on board; we don't

»

Greetings FROM
BERMUDA



ABOVE: ***"What differentiates us is that our crew smile at the passengers"*** CHRIS SLOAN

ABOVE LEFT: ***An elevated level of service is offered in both cabins that feels simpatico with its archipelago home*** BERMUDAIR

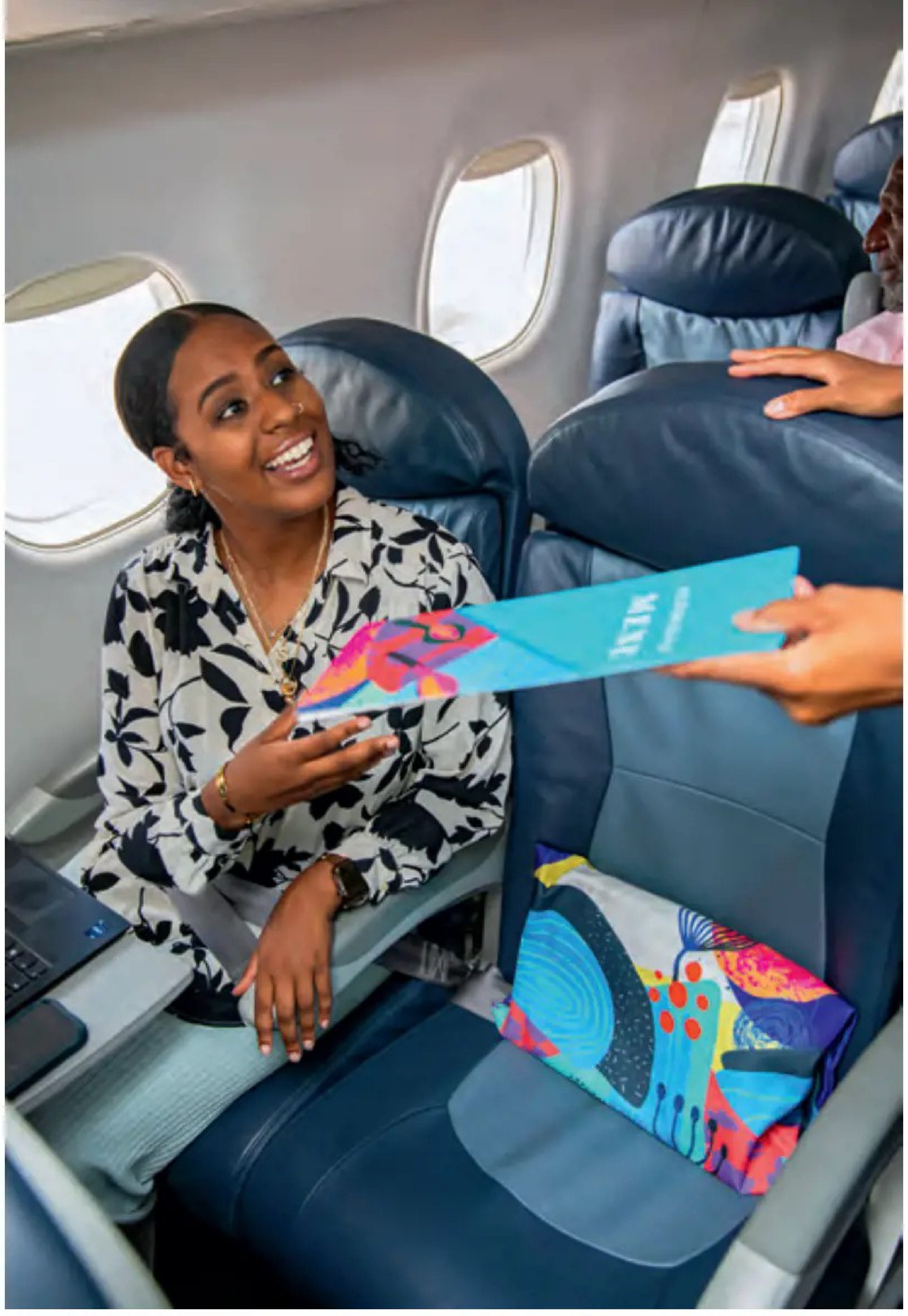
have bags of trash when we land." A generous checked-in and carry-on baggage allowance is important for residents who return with merchandise from North America. A unique, bespoke souvenir created by Scott's wife graces each seat; a 'billow' – a chic pillow, blanket and tote bag combination that reflects the airline livery.

The business class cabin is separated by a curtain and comes with a dedicated flight attendant. Perks include complimentary lounge access, Bermudian artisan meals served on china, upgraded top-shelf wines, spirits and champagnes, plus priority boarding and heavier baggage allowance. Scott believes hospitality supersedes amenities: "What differentiates us is that our crew smile at the passengers." The dignified and personable, mostly Bermudian cabin crew reflect the vibe of the islands. With many repeat customers, the on-board atmosphere feels familial, with genuine crew interaction on a first-name basis, hugs, conversation, spontaneous laughter and even happy birthday greetings. The crew are attired in smart uniforms and, when the weather permits – the iconic Bermuda shorts. Overall, the offering conveys the feeling of being aboard a private jet and is therefore unlike anything else in the market.

Launch and recruitment

Launching a brand-new airline isn't for the faint-hearted, and doing it from an isolated island chain where there's never been a commercial airline is a next-level feat. George Henderson said: "Adam [Scott] was very aggressive in his ambitions for an accelerated timeline to launch the airline. Some airlines can take a couple of years to secure their

BELOW: ***The flight crew on board VQ-BLW (c/n 17000351) on the day of the author's flight home from Bermuda*** CHRIS SLOAN



ABOVE: ***A unique 'billow' – a chic pillow, blanket and tote bag reflecting the airline livery – graces each seat*** BERMUDAIR

> **"Operations began on September 1, 2023, with a pair of roundtrips, Bermuda–Boston/ Logan and Bermuda–Westchester County"**

air operator's certificate (AOC) and we did it in seven months." Their quest began in September 2022 when Scott and Henderson arrived on the island and began securing a founder's club of private, high-net-worth investors who live in Bermuda or have vested interests. With funding secured, work began in earnest during January 2023, and by July it had earned its AOC from the local regulator (who follows UK CAA rules), and won US Department of Transportation approval a few weeks later. Henderson noted: "It was a lot of hard-working with a regulator that hadn't been tasked with this because there's been no commercial airline on the island up to this point." Obtaining US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) pre-clearance at launch was a celebrated win for the new airline.

Recruiting presented its own challenges, and while aviation has always loomed large in Bermuda, a home-grown industry and staff were non-existent. Henderson pointed out: "Hiring good people with all the requisite airline aviation experience, people who had written manuals before, run technical operations and flight operations before, were a factor in our success of launching very, very quickly." Staff hailed from the likes of Air Canada, Azul, British Airways and Etihad – all attracted by the chance to participate in a start-up located in a paradise where lifestyle and tax advantages 'sell' it. The aircraft are in Bermuda overnight, so crew members sleep in their own beds.

Staff numbers total almost 100 and are growing, with most based on the island, though some work remotely. The initial cadre of 20 very experienced pilots hail from South America, the Middle East and Asia – all with Embraer E-Jet experience.

The cabin crew roster of 20 people is about 50% Bermudian and increasing. "Our commitment is to find as much local talent as possible, but we had to train them and get them qualified," revealed Henderson. The airline has invested in the community to mentor and create a culture, and eventually a workforce of home-grown aviators via community outreach, such as STEM programmes. The company has had no shortage of applicants wishing to join the growing enterprise said Henderson: "They listened to the vision that we had. Adam's story is very compelling." Scott reserved his highest praise for his team: "We're lean, agile and entrepreneurial. Everybody is very dedicated to making it work."

There was almost instant customer demand when tickets went on sale shortly before inauguration, beamed Scott: "When we started, it was all Bermuda and obviously it was very easy to inform 65,000 people that we're an airline. The local island has embraced us and is really proud of it." Ticket sales were originally nearly all from local marketing and word-of-mouth, but transitioned to 50/50 between Bermuda and North America as word spread.

Navigating flight issues

Operations began on September 1, 2023, with a pair of roundtrips, Bermuda–Boston/Logan and Bermuda–Westchester County. A portent of future challenges, the flights were delayed by a day due to a hurricane in the area. Commercial success notwithstanding, there have been operational teething troubles and unique challenges endemic with »

RIGHT: ***A clever, locally inspired touch is the pink in-flight LED mood lighting when flying towards Bermuda*** CHRIS SLOAN

BELOW: ***Branded blended winglets*** CHRIS SLOAN

ABOVE LEFT: ***The sparkling new LF Wade International Airport terminal opened in December 2020*** CHRIS SLOAN

ABOVE: ***The main departure lounge*** CHRIS SLOAN

> **"For a tiny airline on a mid-Atlantic archipelago, BermudAir is thinking big"**

being a small start-up carrier operating on an isolated island. Henderson said: "Island nations struggle more from parts availability. We carry a certain amount of parts in stock on the island. Invariably, the part you need when an aircraft goes AOG [aircraft on the ground] is not the part you've got the in the hangar. So then it's how to get these parts to the island quickly and get this aircraft in the sky again."

The mandated dual high frequency radios installed for transoceanic flight have plagued the Embraers – resulting in AOG, which has dented the carrier's reputation a little. The airline emphasises service recovery, sometimes placing passengers on other airlines and booking hotels. Scott, who has delivered parts in an Uber, admitted reliability isn't where it should be: "The biggest challenge is right now only having two aircraft. If I had it do again, I'd start with three and always have a spare." With that in mind, the airline is leasing a pair of 96-seat E190s this spring to use for boosting scheduled passenger services, operating on demand charter flights and to enable it to maintain a dedicated spare aircraft at all times. The E190 offers 1,000kg of extra cargo space over the E175, plus an extra 540nm of range.

Henderson conceded: "The local community has been supportive, but they challenge us, and they should. We make commitments to fly people, which we must honour. So, our big focus is to improve reliability." Added fuel for diversions, additional weight from heavy life rafts and hold baggage create another operational challenge, as every route is over water. Joseph Somers, head of ground operations said: "Flights from North America to Bermuda must carry enough fuel to divert and return back to North America, so we're only able to sell up to 66 seats on the inbound to Bermuda. Outbound, we sell up to 71 seats. Thankfully, we've never come close to diverting back for weather." The airline has earned praise for its commitment to Bermuda and medevac accommodations, and Scott explained its obsessive emphasis on safety and the archipelago's meteorology: "When there's a hurricane, we're the last aircraft out and the first aircraft back. That's something that differentiates us from the others because they just come in, drop people off, pick people up and go home. We're part of the island."

An odyssey continues

In its first 18 months of flying, BermudAir has made steady progress and by this summer it will have the second greatest market share at LF Wade International Airport, according to Cirium data. While rivals have been slow to return capacity to the market, the airline has helped to increase overall seat capacity to 75% of what it was before the COVID-19 pandemic. As well as generating new connectivity, the airline is stimulating leisure traffic by promoting tourism, which has been on the decline, particularly in the northeast US and Canada. Scott said: "Most people don't recognise that there is a place with palm trees and the most beautiful beaches in the world, an hour and 45 minutes away. Instead, they think they must travel down to Florida for three hours or take a four-hour drive to the Hamptons." BermudAir Holidays – bundling airfare with exclusive hotels and world-famous golf courses – is the first of its kind on the island. "I have never once talked to somebody about Bermuda who has said they didn't like it. Every time somebody comes here, they love this place," added Scott.

BERMUDAIR
E175

BELOW: ***On-board service includes artisan Bermudian meals served on china plates*** CHRIS SLOAN

The carrier plans to introduce a loyalty programme, interline agreements, add a dedicated medevac service, charters for business and school groups, and expand the network further afield. Network aspirations include London, Zurich and Paris, the Caribbean and the midwestern US. The imminent arrival of the two former Aerolíneas Argentinas E190s is supercharging growth and reliability, and dissipating weight penalties. The likely layout is 88 economy seats, plus eight in business class more aligned with a 1-2 configuration. Scott said: "The E190 has considerably better operating performance." The larger Embraers will be deployed to higher-capacity and more distant markets like Boston and Toronto, allowing one of the E175s to become the much-needed spare and charter aircraft, and backfilling the additional frequencies to high-demand destinations. Longer-term, the E190-E2, and in full circle back to Odyssey, the A220 is under consideration, particularly for Europe.

With that in mind, the Aisle Class seats may yet make an appearance. The mini-suites, a first of their kind on a regional jet aircraft, used the existing non-reclining economy seat, but the frame around it created more space and privacy for the customer. Although it is a little down the list of priorities, Scott said: "We built and developed a fantastic product – we'd still like to get it on board the aircraft." Down the road, Starlink ultra-high-speed Wi-Fi, seatback power at least in premium cabins, and hot food are mooted as possible upgrades.

For a tiny airline on a mid-Atlantic archipelago, BermudAir is thinking big, as Scott said: "I think obviously an island like Bermuda will have a limit in the number of aircraft that it could sustain for the home airline. We believe our model is replicable in other geographies. Our shareholders are very keen for us to expand beyond the confines of Bermuda." He has not let go of his Odyssey dreams, applying the lessons of BermudAir: "We certainly have transatlantic ambitions – Odyssey is still where we ultimately want to go. There are synergies between what we're doing here with BermudAir and what Odyssey aspires to be." The original niche from London/City is there for the taking since British Airways discontinued its business class A318 service to New York/JFK in 2020.

From a performance and commercial perspective, Scott said BermudAir stacks up well compared with other airline start-ups: "We're outperforming and I'm pleased about that." The airline won't disclose when it is expected to be profitable but says it's completed another round of capital fundraising. In five years' time Henderson said: "We will have gone through this painful start-up period with a much more refined operation. Consequently, we'll be very well ensconced in the hearts and minds of the local population, even more so than we are now." The carrier operated more than 3,000 flights last year – Bermuda's first local airline has grand ambitions. AW

ABOVE: ***VQ-BLW on gate four at LF Wade International Airport***
CHRIS SLOAN

The author wishes to thank the historic Bermuda Hamilton Princess Hotel for its generosity and luxurious accommodation.

BELOW: ***The airline operates a pair of 88-seat, 12-year old Embraer E175s***
CHRIS SLOAN

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debuts in Dubai
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Belgrade-based Air Serbia received Airbus A330-243, YU-ARE (c/n 1521), in 'EXPO 2027 Belgrade, Serbia' special colours on February 6. It is one of two airframes to wear the livery and one of four A330s in the airline's fleet
AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/TT

Fly Jinnah [9P/FJL 'Okaab']

AP-BPF	A320-214	4133	ex JY-AZA, dd 23.02.25 Amman – Karachi, lsd fr BOC Aviation

Serene Air [ER/SEP 'Serene']

LY-NOW	A320-232	4328	ex 9H-HUB, dd 16.02.25 & entered service 26.02.25, lsd fr/op by GetJet Airlines
9H-GTS	A320-232	4384	ex VT-IGT, dd 16.02.25 & entered service 28.02.25, lsd fr/op by Airhub Airlines

Mack Air [MKB 'Greentail']

A2-	Cessna 208B/EX	208B5849	ex N9011Q, dd 02.25, ferried 03-12.02.25 Wichita – Maun as N9011Q & reg'n canx 14.02.25 on export to Botswana

Oman Air [WY/OMA 'Oman Air']

A4O-MO	B737-8	63369	ex N4022T, ff 28.08.24, dd 28.01.25

Emirates [EK/UAE 'Emirates']

A6-EXD	A350-941	703	ex F-WZHH, ff 09.12.24, dd 21.01.25

Air China [CA/CCA 'Air China']

B-20DQ	B737-8	60924	ex N1787B, N1786B, ff 08.04.20, dd 22.01.25
B-20E3	B737-8	60928	ex N1786B, ff 11.02.22, dd 17.01.25

China Eastern Airlines [MU/CES 'China Eastern']

B-20CC	B737-8	61645	ex N1786B, ff 14.08.19, dd 10.01.25
B-32KP	A321-251nx	12349	ex B-007A, ff 24.12.24, dd 16.01.25
B-32LG	A320-251n	12387	ex D-AUAB, ff 07.01.25, dd 22.01.25
B-32L9	A321-251nx	12312	ex D-AVZC, ff 08.01.25, dd 22.01.25

China Southern Airlines [CZ/CSN 'China Southern']

B-32KX	A319-153n	12149	ex D-AVWD, ff 18.12.24, dd 23.01.25
B-32K3	A321-251nx	12343	ex D-AVXA, ff 20.12.24, dd 02.01.25
B-32L2	A320-251n	12419	ex B-007D, ff 03.01.25, dd 23.01.25

Shandong Airlines [SC/CDG 'Shandong']

B-223V	B737-8	61460	ex N5573K, N5515X, N40221, N4022T, ff 06.03.22, dd 21.01.25

Shenzhen Airlines [ZH/CSZ 'Shenzhen Air']

B-20ER	B737-8	61154	ex N235BE, N5573K, N5573B, N40220, N4022T, ff 19.02.22, dd 17.01.25

Sichuan Airlines [3U/CSC 'Sichuan']

B-32JG	A321-231(F)	3005	ex N3005M, dd 04.02.25, lsd fr Cinda Financial Leasing, (N3005M canx 04.02.25)

West Air [PN/CHB 'China West']

B-32JM	A319-153n	12123	ex D-AVWE, ff 02.01.25, dd 14.01.25

Xiamen Airlines [MF/CXA 'Xiamen Air']

B-20E1	B737-8	64679	ex N1786B, ff 07.01.20, dd 23.01.25

China Airlines [CI/CAL 'Dynasty']

B-18120	A321-271nx	12086	ex D-AVXX, ff 07.01.25, dd 21.01.25

Air Canada [AC/ACA 'Air Canada']

C-FFIP	B737-8	63385	ex N40221, N4022T, ff 08.12.24, dd 15.01.25 & reg'd same day, lsd fr BOC Aviation, fleet # '573', ferried Boeing Field – Melbourne MLB 16.01.25 for work, to Windsor 31.01.25 for continued work
C-FFIQ	B737-8	66476	ex N4026T, N4022T, ff 19.12.2, dd 28.01.25 & reg'd same day, lsd fr BOC Aviation, fleet # '574', ferried Boeing Field – Melbourne MLB 29.01.25 for work, to Windsor 10.02.25 for continued work

Perimeter Aviation [YP/PAG 'Perimeter']

C-GYCV	DHC08 314	487	ex 9Y-WIT, reg'd 12.02.25

German Airways [ZQ/GER 'German Eagle']

D-AWSI	ERJ190-100LR	19000074	ret fr KLM Cityhopper lease & ferried Amsterdam – Cologne 13.01.25

TAAG – Angloa Airlines [DT/DTA 'Angola']

D2-TEQ	B787-9	66877	ex N8572C, N20021, N9676N, ff 17.05.22, dd 29.01.25, lsd fr AerCap, named 'Namibe'

Binter Canarias [NT/IBB 'Binter']

EC-OJI	ERJ190-400	19020151	reg'd 24.01.25
EC-OJJ	ERJ190-400	19020152	reg'd 24.01.25

Cygnus Air [RGN]

YL-LDZ	A321-231(F)	974	ex N974M, dd 12.02.25, lsd fr/op by SmartLynx

Iberia [IB/IBE 'Iberia']

EC-OIL	A321-253ny	11504	reg'd 24.01.25

LEVEL [LL/LVL 'Dali']

EC-OHY	A330-243	1319	reg'd 21.01.25

Privilege Style [P6/PVG 'Privilege']

CS-TSY	A320-232	2430	ex EI-HJB, dd 12.02.25 Lisbon – Malaga & entered service 13.02.25, lsd fr/op by White
EC-NLJ	A321-231	3636	ferried Düsseldorf – Madrid 03.12.24, lsd to/op for Air Europa 03.12.24-28.02.25

Swiftair [WT/SWT 'Swift']

EC-IXE	B737-883(F)	30468	ex LZ-, dd 24.02.25, lsd fr/op for DHL

Volotea [V7/VOE 'Volotea']

EC-OJT	A320-214	5112	reg'd 31.01.24

Vueling [VY/VLG 'Vueling']

EC-OFY	A320-214	4867	reg'd 07.01.25
EC-OGD	A320-232	2911	reg'd 27.01.25

Ryanair [FR/RYR 'Ryanair']

EI-IKP	B737-8200	67113	ex N4022T, ff 04.12.24, dd 15.01.25 & reg'd same day

Atlas Air [IRH 'Atlas Avia']

EP-LEE	B737-3H4	27955	ex EY-312, dd 02.25

Marabu Airlines [DI/MBU 'Marabu']

ES-MBG	A320-271n	8426	ex VT-IVT, dd 21.02.25, lsd fr Jackson Square Aviation, ferried Nagpur – Vilnius 21-22.02.25

SmartLynx Estonia [MYX 'Tallinn Cat']

ES-SAM	A320-232	1896	ret fr AJet lease, ferried Bygdoszcz – Teeside 20.02.25 after storage

Ethiopian Airlines [ET/ETH 'Ethiopian']

ET-BAB	B777-F	68140	ff 08.01.25, dd 22.01.25

Ascend Airways [YD/SYG 'Synergy']

G-HAGI	B737-8	42828	ret fr Oman Air lease & ferried Muscat – Prague 06.02.25 for work

BA Euroflyer [A0/EFW 'Griffin']

G-POWM	A320-232	2564	ex 4R-ABJ, dd 30.01.25 Liverpool – Gatwick & entered service 31.01.25, lsd fr/op by Titan Airways

easyJet Airline [U2/EZY 'Easy']

G-UZEF	A320-251n	12383	ex B-005J, ff 19.12.24, dd 13.01.25 & reg'd same day

Maersk Air Cargo UK [MUK 'Blue Star']

G-MACY	B767-204ER(F)	24457	ex OY-SRH, reg'd 26.02.25, parked Shannon

TUI Airways [BY/TOM 'Tomjet']

G-TUOA	B737-8	44635	ex N4022T, ff 15.12.24, dd 24.01.25 & reg'd same day, named 'Toulouse'

Sunrise Airways [S6/KSZ]

9H-VDS	A320-214	1757	ex HK-5051, dd 27.02.25 & entered service same day. lsd fr/op by Galistair Malta

Aero-K [RF/EOK 'Aerohanguk']

HL8596	A320-216	2612	ex M-ABSZ, reg'd 17.02.25, lsd fr Babcock & Brown, ferried Da Nang – Cheongju 19.02.25, (M-ABSZ canx 17.02.25)

Key to Abbreviations

a/c	aircraft
als	airlines
awys	airways
bf	bought from
b/u	broken up/scrapped
canx	cancelled
cls	colours
cn	manufacturer's construction/serial number
cnvrtd	converted
dbf	destroyed by fire
dbr	damaged beyond repair
dd	delivery date
ex	previous reg'n
ff	first flight
frtr	freighter
lrf	last revenue flight
lsd fr	leased from
lsd to	leased to
msn	see cn
ntu	not taken up
oo	on order
op	operated
pax	passenger
pwfu	permanently withdrawn from use
reg'd	registered
reg'n	registration
ret fr	returned from
ret to	returned to
rr	re-registered
rts	return to service
sb	sold by
scr	scrapped/broken up
st	sold to
std	stored
tba	to be advised
unk	unknown
wfu	withdrawn from use
w/o	written off/destroyed

EXPO 2027
BELGRADE
SERBIA
YU-ARE

Air Incheon [KJ/AIH 'Air Incheon']

HL7423	B747-48E(F)	25782	dd 14.02.25

Jeju Air [7C/JJA 'Jejuair']

HL8552	B737-8	66540	ex N4025T, N4022T, ff 11.07.21, dd 31.01.25 & reg'd same day

Korean Air [KE/KAL 'Korean']

HL8392	B787-9	37390	ff 11.07.21, dd 17.01.25 & reg'd same day

Thai Lion Air [SL/TLM 'Mentari']

HS-LVR	B737-9GPER	38300	ex PK-LHU, dd 07.02.25 Batam – Bangkok DMK, lsd fr AerCap

flyadeal [F3/FAD 'Adeal']

HZ-FBL	A320-251n	12286	ex F-WWBM, ff 13.01.25, dd 31.01.25, lsd fr Macquarie AirFinance, named 'Al-Nahar'

flynas [XY/KNE 'Nas Express']

F-HDRF	A320-214	2899	ex B-6287, dd 09.02.25 & entered service 15.02.25, lsd fr/op by Amelia International
F-HDRG	A320-214	2950	ex B-6303, dd 16.01.25 & entered service 04.02.25, lsd fr/op by Amelia International
HZ-NS87	A320-251n	12414	ex F-WWTZ, ff 20.01.25, dd 31.01.25

Saudia [SV/SVA 'Saudi']

EC-ODQ	A330-343	1077	ex F-HJAZ, dd 06.02.25 & entered service 21.02.25, lsd fr/op by Wamos Air
EC-ODR	A330-343E	1103	ex F-HROK, dd 20.02.25 & entered service 02.03.25, lsd fr/op by Wamos Air

Poste Air Cargo [M4/MSA 'Mistral Wings']

EI-FXY	B737-8EH(BCF)	34281	ex 2-LBIS, reg'd 24.02.25 to UMBF Trust & Agency Services (Ireland) Ltd, ferried Sofia – Shannon 08.02.25, ret to Sofia 12.02.25 prior to delivery both as 2-LBIS & reg'n canx 24.02.25

ANA – All Nippon Airways [NH/ANA 'All Nippon']

JA985A	B787-10	66999	ff 11.01.25, dd 29.01.25 & reg'd same day

Japan Airlines [JL/JAL 'Japanair']

JA09WJ	A350-1041	686	ex F-WZFS, ff 11.12.24, dd 29.01.25 & reg'd 28.01.25

Widerøe [WF/WIF 'Wideroe']

LN-WSD	DHC-8 202	427	ex C-FCXA, reg'd 16.02.25 to Widerøe Asset AS, ferried Calgary – Bodø as C-FCXA 05-07.02.25 & reg'n canx 14.02.25

Feeling Air

LV-KLR	Cessna 208B/EX	208B5839	dd 27.01.25

Flybondi [FO/FBZ 'Bondi']

LY-NVL	A320-232	4683	ex HA-LWJ, dd 03.02.25 & entered service 11.02.25, lsd fr/op by Avion Express

JetSMART Argentina [WJ/JES 'Smartbird']

CC-AWW	A321-271nx	11209	ex D-AZAK, dd 19.02.25 Santiago SCL – Buenos Aires EZE, lsd fr Griffin Global Asset Management

Avion Express [X9/NVD 'Nordvind']

LY-NVG	A320-214	4175	ex 2-AEIP, dd 08.02.25, lsd fr Jakcson Square Aviation, ferried Opa-locka – Kaunas 08-09.02.25, (2-AEIP canx 04.02.25)

Jump Air [JUP 'Jump Air']

LY-JUA	ATR 72-212A (500)	858	ret fr Madagascar Airlines lease & ferried Antananarivo – Mönchengladbach 11-13.01.25

Electra Airways [3E/EAF 'Electra']

LZ-EAB	A320-231	308	ret fr Air Arabia Maroc lease

GullivAir [G2/GBG 'Vagabond']

LZ-TWO	A330-223	493	ex F-HUNO, dd 12.02.25 Châteauroux – Sofia, lsd fr Fortress Aviation

Alaska Airlines [AS/ASA 'Alaska']

N725AL	B737-9	67431	ex N1781B, N4022T, ff 15.12.24, dd 21.01.25 & reg'd same day

Allegiant Air [G4/AAY 'Allegiant']

N810MG	B737-8200	68001	ex N737ST, N4022L, N4022T, ff 14.01.24, dd 29.01.25 & reg'd 21.02.25

American Airlines [AA/AAL 'American']

N300UB	B737-8	44506	ex N4022T, ff 03.12.24, dd 24.01.25 & reg'd same day, fleet # '3UB'

Bering Air [8E/BRG 'Bering']

N703BA	Cessna 408	408-0039	reg'd 12.02.25

Delta Air Lines [DL/DAL 'Delta']

N330DU	A220-300	55331	ex C-GPWJ, ff 23.12.24, dd 30.01.25 & reg'd same day, fleet # '8330'

Envoy Airlines (American Eagle) [MQ/ENY 'Envoy']

N330JT	ERJ170-200LR	17000987	ex PR-EIT, reg'd 26.02.25, ferried São José dos Campos – Abilene 27.02.25

GlobalX [G6/GXA 'Gemini']

N530FL	A321-231	1153	ex YR-NTS, dd 06.02.25 & ferried Sanford – Miami 07.02.25, lsd fr Fortress Aviation, had ferried Lakeland – Sanford 24.01.25 prior to lease

Hawaiian Airlines [HA/HAL 'Hawaiian']

N5881K	A330-343(F)	1167	ex F-WTBH, lsd fr Altavair AirFinance & reg'd 27.02.25 to UMB Bank NA Trustee, to be op for Amazon Prime Air, cnvrtd to A330-343(F) 10.24 at Dresden
N5897K	A330-343(F)	1245	ex F-WTAU, lsd fr Altavair AirFinance & reg'd 20.02.25 to UMB Bank NA Trustee, to be op for Amazon Prime Air, cnvrtd to A330-343(F) 01.25 at Shanghai SHA, ferried to Honolulu 27.02.25 prior to entry into service

IBC Airways [II/CSQ 'Chasqui']

N16112	Emb-145XR	145660	ex PT-SEU, dd 04.02.25, parked Kingman

jetBlue Airways [B6/JBU 'Jet Blue']

N3242J	A220-300	55319	ex C-GPRL, ff 20.12.24, dd 17.01.25 & reg'd same day, named 'Blue Come Here Often?'

We welcome any feedback on this listing

(The listing is alphabetical with reference to the registration of the country of origin. Columns indicate the registration, type, construction number and notes.)

Binter Canarias took delivery of Embraer E195-E2, EC-OJI (c/n 19020151), on October 25, although the aircraft was not registered until January 24, 2025. The all-economy, 132-seat aircraft is one of 15 examples in the airline's Canary Islands-based fleet
AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/ SIMON WILLSON

Binter
bintercanarias.com
LINEAS AEREAS DE CANARIAS
EC-OJI

Airliner Deliveries

The latest commercial aircraft deliveries from manufacturers and lessors

Muscat-based Oman Air accepted delivery of Boeing 737 MAX 8, A4O-MO (c/n 63369), on January 28. The all economy, 189-seat aircraft, one of 15 in the fleet, is seen here at Glasgow, where it made a technical stop on its ferry flight from Seattle to Oman
AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/ROLF JONSEN

N3255J	A220-300	55335	ex C-FOWQ, ff 21.01.25, dd 29.01.25 & reg'd 30.01.25, named 'Blue Tickets To Paradise'

Kalitta Air [K4/KFS 'Connie']

N795CK	B777-F1H	35610	ex A6-EFJ, lsd fr DAE Capital & reg'd 14.02.25 to DAE 35610 Trust , ferried Dubai – Oscoda 16.02.25 on delivery

Key Lime Air [KG/LYM 'Key Lime']

N227LE	SA227-DC	DC-837B	ex C-GSOO, reg'd 25.02.25 to CBG LLC

Kingfisher Air Services [BEZ 'Seabreeze']

N967HL	Cessna 208B	208B0426	ex N706FX, dd 08.02.24, ops in DHL colours

Northern Air Cargo [NC/NAC 'Yukon']

N409YK	B737-436(F)	25859	ex N859AU, dd 04.02.25, lsd fr Automatic, entered service 08.02.25, officially rr N409YK 13.02.25

Phoenix Air [PH/GRB]

N118PA	Saab 340A	340A-151	ferried Warsaw – Cartersville 13-16.02.25 on delivery

Republic Airways [YX/RPA 'Brickyard']

N778YX	ERJ170-200LR	17000985	ex PR-EIS, reg'd 20.02.25, ferried São José dos Campos – Indianapolis 21.02.25, United Express colours

SkyWest Airlines [OO/SKW 'Skywest']

N374CA	CRJ.701ER	10090	ferried Tucson Tucson – Roswell 21.12.24, cnvrtd to CRJ.550 & reg'd as such 10.02.25, ferried to Fresno 05.01.25 & entered service 24.01.25 as Delta Connection
N531GJ	CRJ.550	10218	ex N152GJ, reg'd 18.02.25, parked Oklahoma City
N532GJ	CRJ.550	10219	ex N153GJ, dd 19.02.25 St. Louis – Oklahoma City
N575GJ	CRJ.550	10260	ex N519LR, ferried St. Louis – Oklahoma City 07.02.25

Southwest Airlines [WN/SWA 'Southwest']

N8935Q	B737-8	68457	ex N40235, N4022T, ff 13.12.24, dd 10.01.25 & reg'd 13.01.25
N8936Q	B737-8	68459	ex N40220, N4022T, ff 15.12.24, dd 23.01.25 & reg'd same day
N8937Q	B737-8	68628	ex N4022S, N4022T, ff 13.12.24, dd 09.01.25 & reg'd 10.01.25
N8938Q	B737-8	42584	ex N4022T, ff 10.01.25, dd 31.01.25 & reg'd same day
N8939Q	B737-8	42585	ff 20.01.25, dd 30.01.25 & reg'd same day

United Airlines [UA/UAL 'United']

N14533	A321-271nx	12300	ex F-WZME, ff 16.01.25, dd 30.01.25 & reg'd same day, fleet # '4533'
N17359	B737-8	67634	ex N4022T, ff 10.01.25, dd 30.01.25 & reg'd same day, fleet # '7359'
N17361	B737-8	67632	ex N4022T, ff 14.12.24, dd 10.01.25 & reg'd 13.01.25, fleet # '7361'
N17362	B737-8	68808	ex N4022T, ff 17.12.24, dd 13.01.25 & reg'd same day, fleet # 7362'
N29991	B787-9	37071	ff 21.12.24, dd 16.01.25 & reg'd same day, fleet # '0991'
N47357	B737-8	67633	ex N4022T, ff 06.12.24, dd 21.01.25 & reg'd same day, fleet # '7357'
N47360	B737-8	68827	ex N40020, N4022T, ff 09.12.24, dd 22.01.25 & reg'd same day
N74532	A321-271nx	12296	ex F-WZMC, ff 03.01.25, dd 28.01.25 & reg'd same day, fleet # '4532'
N77584	B737-9	67624	ff 11.01.25, dd 27.01.25 & reg'd same dayto UMB Bank NA Trustee, fleet # '7584'
N77587	B737-9	67631	ex N4022T, ff 13.12.24, dd 23.01.25 & reg'd same day to Bank of Utah Trustee, lsd fr Aviation Capital Group, fleet # '7587'

Austrian Airlines [OS/AUA 'Austrian']

SE-MKC	ATR 72-212A (600)	1313	ex F-WWET, dd 27.01.25 & entered service same day, lsd fr/op by Braathens
SE-MKL	ATR 72-212A (600)	1574	ex F-WWEH, dd 24.01.25 & entered service same day, lsd fr/op by Braathens

SmartWings [QS/TVS 'Sky Travel']

OK-SWK	B737-8	62914	ex N4022T, ff 25.11.24, dd 21.01.25, lsd fr AerCap

TUIfly Belgium [TB/JAF 'Beauty']

OO-TMT	B737-8	44660	ex N4022T, ff 05.01.25, dd 29.01.25 & reg'd same day, named 'Cidade de Tui'

Jettime [JP/JTD 'Jet Time']

OY-JYF	B737-81M	37161	ex EI-GRJ, reg'd 24.02.25, lsd fr Macquarie AirFinance

Z Air [7Z/EZR 'Easyway']

PJ-	Emb-135KL	145667	ex N841AE, (N841AE canx 21.02.25 on export to Curaçao)

GOL Linhas Aéreas [G3/GLO 'Gol']

PS-GPQ	B737-8	42556	ex N8703J, N1780B, ff 14.04.16, dd 16.01.25 & reg'd 31.01.25 to SFVI Aircraft Holdings Inc 7 DAC

Azur Air [ZF/AFV 'Azur Air']

RA-73357	B757-28A	28171	ex VQ-BTR, dd 07.02.25

BRA – Braathens Regional Airways [TF/BRX 'Braathens']

SE-MKE	ATR 72-212A (600)	1348	ret fr Austrian Airlines lease & ferried Vienna – Malmö 11.02.25
SE-RGD	A319-112	3346	ex OE-IGY, reg'd 19.02.25, lsd fr Deucalion Aviation

Norwegian Air Sweden AOC [D8/NSZ 'Rednose']

SE-RTN	B737-8	62907	ex N4022T, ff 30.11.24, dd 09.01.25 & reg'd same day to Wilmington Trust SP Services (Dublin) Ltd, lsd fr AerCap
SE-RTR	B737-8	66300	ex N4022A, N4022T, ff 11.12.24, dd 14.01.25 & reg'd same day to Jackson Square Aviation Ireland Ltd

AlMasria Universal Airlines [UJ/LMU 'Almasria']

SU-TCN	A321-211	1629	ex XU-723, dd 22.02.25, lsd fr Carlyle Aviation Partners ferried Phnom Penh – Sharm el-Sheikh 22-23.02.25
SU-TCP	A321-231	1004	ex YR-LID, dd 20.02.25, ferried Bucharest BBU – Amman 21.02.25

Bluebird Airways [BZ/BBG 'Candia Bird']

YR-JUL	A320-232	3863	ex VT-INY, dd 16.01.25, lsd fr/op by Dan Air

Marathon Airlines [O8/MTO 'Marathon']

SX-PTM	ERJ190-100SR	19000163	ret fr United Nigeria lease & ferried Lagos – Bygdoszcz 23-24.02.25
SX-RMA	ERJ190-200LR	19000361	ret fr Camair-Co lease & ferried Douala – Bygdoszcz 27-08.02.25

BBN Airlines [B5/BBT 'Big Blue']

TC-GPC	A321-231	3302	ret fr AJet lease & ferried Antalya – Amman 10.01.25

Corendon Airlines [XC/CAI 'Corendon']

TC-MKG	B737-8	66344	ret fr IndiGo lease & ferried Delhi – Antalya 27.02.25

SunExpress [XQ/SXS 'Sun Express']

TC-SPI	B737-82R	40725	ret fr AJet lease & ferried Antalya – Ostrava 08.02.25, ret to Antalya 20.02.25 after paint/work

Turkish Airlines [TK/THY 'Turkish']

TC-LPO	A321-271nx	12410	ex D-AZAF, ff 15.01.25, dd 30.01.25 to NAS Aviation Services, lsd fr AerCap

Tunisair [TU/TUN 'Tunisair']

9H-MLL	A320-214	5372	ex EI-GSY, dd 20.02.25 Stuttgart – Tuis & entered service 21.02.25 lsd fr/op by Avion Express Malta

Air Astana [KC/KZR 'Astanaline']

EI-KID	A320-271n	12360	ex F-WWBX, ff 03.01.25, dd 24.01.25 & reg'd same day to Avolon Leasing Ireland 3 Ltd

Alaman Air [TTR 'Alaman Air']

UP-CJ015	CRJ.200ER	7676	ex HA-LNA, dd 02.25, named 'Balzhan'

Key to Abbreviations

a/c	aircraft
als	airlines
awys	airways
bf	bought from
b/u	broken up/scrapped
canx	cancelled
cls	colours
cn	manufacturer's construction/serial number
cnvrtd	converted
dbf	destroyed by fire
dbr	damaged beyond repair
dd	delivery date
ex	previous reg'n
ff	first flight
frtr	freighter
lrf	last revenue flight
lsd fr	leased from
lsd to	leased to
msn	see cn
ntu	not taken up
oo	on order
op	operated
pax	passenger
pwfu	permanently withdrawn from use
reg'd	registered
reg'n	registration
ret fr	returned from
ret to	returned to
rr	re-registered
rts	return to service
sb	sold by
scr	scrapped/broken up
st	sold to
std	stored
tba	to be advised
unk	unknown
wfu	withdrawn from use
w/o	written off/destroyed

FlyArystan [FS/AYN 'Arystan']

EI-KFF	A320-232	6576	ex 9H-WDC, reg'd 21.02.25 to Wilmington Trust SP Services (Dublin) Ltd, lsd fr SMBC Aviation Capital, named 'Polaris', ferried Katowice – Almaty 25.02.25

SkyUp Airlines [PQ/SQP 'Skyup']

UR-SQB	B737-8H6	40153	4723

Alliance Airlines [QQ/UTY 'Unity']

VH-	ERJ190-100AR	19000040	ex N239JB, ferried Macon – San José SJO as N239JB 14.02.25 for work prior to delivery

Hardy Aviation

VH-	SA227-DC	DC-897B	ex N958BA, dd 02.25

Jetstar Airways [JQ/JST 'Jetstar']

VH-A5C	A320-251n	12374	ex F-WWIG, ff 20.01.25, dd 30.01.25 to Qantas Airways

Sydney Seaplanes

VH-CXS	DHC-2 Mk.I	1360	ex N323WA, reg'd 12.02.25, lsd fr Blue Sky Airways

Virgin Australia Airlines [VA/VOZ 'Kanga']

VH-IXK	B737-8SA	44220	ex 9V-MGD, reg'd 05.02.25 to Pembroke Aircraft Leasing (UK) Ltd

Air India Express [IX/AXB 'Express India']

VT-BWK	B737-8	63289	ex N5573K, N1779B, N1786B, ff 07.05.19, dd 16.01.25, lsd fr Aviation Capital Group
VT-EXA	A320-214	6446	ex D-AXAS, dd 16.02.25, lsd fr China Aircraft Leasing Group
VT-EXB	A320-214	6690	ex D-AVVZ, dd 15.02.25, lsd fr China Aircraft Leasing Group
VT-EXC	A320-214	6715	ex D-AXAD, dd 15.02.25, lsd fr China Aircraft Leasing Group
VT-RTH	A320-251n	11779	ex F-WWBJ, dd 14.02.25, lsd fr China Aircraft Leasing Group

Akasa Air [QP/AKJ 'Akasa Air']

VT-YBD	B737-8200	63872	ex N4022L, N4022T, ff 08.12.24, dd 23.01.25

IndiGo [6E/IGO 'Ifly']

VT-IWU	A320-251nx	12252	ex D-AVYE, ff 08.01.25, dd 22.01.25
VT-NCB	A321-271nx	12339	ex F-WWAM, ff 09.01.25, dd 30.01.25
VT-NCD	A321-251nx	12388	ex D-AYAI, ff 09.01.25, dd 28.01.25

Aeroméxico [AM/AMX 'Aeromexico']

N188AM	B737-8	66298	ex N4022H, N4022T, ff 30.11.24, dd 13.01.25 & reg'd same day to Bank of Utah Trustee
N285AM	B737-8	66299	ex N4022T, ff 26.11.24, dd 13.1.25 & reg'd same day to Bank of Utah Trustee
N469AM	B737-9	66372	ex N4022T, ff 14.12.24, dd 31.01.25 & reg'd same day to UMB Bank NA Trustee, lsd fr Air Lease Corp

Air Serbia [JU/ASL 'Air Serbia']

YU-ARE	A330-243	1521	ex OE-LCL, dd 11.02.25 Düsseldorf – Zagreb, lsd fr Altavair AirFinance, (OE-LCL canx 06.02.25)

Air Albania [ZB/ABN 'Air Albania']

LZ-FSB	A320-214	3055	ex OE-IZW, dd 15.02.25, & entered service 19.02.25 lsd fr/op by Fly2Sky, named 'Naimi'
UR-SQO	B737-82R	40880	ex OE-ISL, dd 18.02.25 & entered service 19.02.25, lsd fr/op by SkyUp Airlines, named 'Lasgushi'

Air Montenegro [4O/MNE 'Mount Eagle']

UR-EMA	ERJ190-100STD	19000494	ex UR-DSA, dd 11.02.25 & entered service 15.02.25, lsd fr/op by Windrose Airlines until 31.10.25

Arkia – Israeli Airlines [IZ/AIZ 'Arkia']

LZ-EAH	A320-214	2930	ex N293CL, dd 15.02.25 Varna – Tel Aviv, lsd fr/op by Eletra Airways

Buraq Air [UZ/BRQ 'Buraqair']

5A-BAB	A320-214	4927	ex RP-C3267, dd 12.02.25 Antalya – Bengazi, lsd fr AFG Germany

Air Excel [XLL]

5H-GEO	Cessna 208B/EX 208B5015		ex 5H-RAJ, reg'd 24.05.24 to Gen Air Services Ltd

Coastal Travels

5H-	Cessna 208B/EX	208B5830	ex N90093, dd 02.25, ferried Wichita – Dar-es-Salaam as N90093 04-14.12.24 & reg'n canx 11.02.25
5H-	Cessna 208B/EX	208B5831	ex N9010B, dd 02.25, ferried Wichita – Dar-es-Salaam as N9010B 04-14.12.24 & reg'n canx 11.02.25
5H-	Cessna 208B/EX	208B5843	ex N90100, dd 02.25, ferried Wichita – Dar-es-Salaam as N90100 18-26.01.25 & reg'n canx 11.02.25

NG Eagle [XLE 'Aquila']

5N-NGE	Emb-145MP	145360	ex 5N-BZL, dd 01.25

XE Jet [XEJ 'Red Tail']

5N-XEK	CRJ.200ER	7937	ex N256PS, dd 02.25, lsd fr Regional One, ferried St. Thomas – Keflavik as N256PS 19.02.25, continued to Abuja 23.02.25 & reg'n canx 26.02.25

Mauritania Airlines [L6/MAI 'Mauritania']

LZ-BHL	A320-232	2987	ex VP-CAG, dd 14.02.25 Sofia – Nouakchott & entered service 15.02.25, lsd fr/op by BH Air

Kenya Airways [KQ/KQA 'Kenya']

5Y-CYF	B737-8EH	39604	ex 2-VHZL, dd 13.02.25, lsd fr DAE Capital, ferried Saltillo – Nairobi 13-16.02.25, (2-VHZL canx 03.02.25)

Air Algérie [AH/DAH 'Air Algerie']

G-HODL	B737-82R	38175	ex LY-BUS, dd 16.02.25 & entered service 18.02.25, lsd fr/op by Ascend Airways
9H-SAT	B737-8Q8	29368	ex UR-SQQ, dd 29.01.25 & entered service 01.02.25, lsd fr/op by SkyUp Europe

AirX Charter [AXY 'Legend']

9H-ISLA	Emb-135BJ	145555	ex 5N-LOS, dd 02.25

Avion Express Malta [4X/MLH 'South Wind']

9H-AMJ	A320-232	3531	ret fr Viva Aerobus lease & ferried Monterrey – Castellón de la Plana 18-19.02.25
9H-MLE	A320-214	4767	ret fr Vietnam Airlines lease & ferried Ho Chi Minh City – Sofia 13.02.25
9H-MLO	A320-214	5653	ret fr Vietnam Airlines lease & ferried Ho Chi Minh City – Castellón de la Plana 13-14.02.25
9H-MLY	A320-232	3943	ret fr Vietnam Airlines lease & ferried Ho Chi Minh City – Rijeka 13.02.25

Hi Fly Malta [3L/HFM 'Moonraker']

9H-ALC	A330-202	1283	ex EI-EJL, dd 15.02.25 Rome FCO – Beja, lsd fr Air Lease Corp

Malta Air [MW/MAY 'Blue Med']

9H-QFM	B737-8AS	37515	ex SP-RNA, dd 12.02.25
9H-QFN	B737-800	44780	ex SP-RSY, dd 19.02.25
9H-QFO	B737-8AS	33633	ex SP-RKX, dd 02.25

SmartLynx Malta [2N/LYX 'Malta Cat']

9H-EDO	A320-214	3954	ex ES-SAX, dd 03.02.25 Madrid – Erfurt, lsd fr AerCap, to Vilnius 25.02.25
9H-GEM	B737-8	42830	ret fr AJet lease & ferried Istanbul SAW – Prague 27.02.25
9H-SLP	A320-232	1663	ex ES-SAW, dd 24.02.25 Amman – St. Athan, lsd fr Aero Capital Solutions

Wizz Air Malta [W4/WMT 'Wizz Malta']

9H-WNT	A321-271nx	12228	ex D-AVZZ, ff 10.01.25, dd 28.01.25 to Wizz Air

Malaysia Airlines [MH/MAS 'Malaysian']

9M-MVE	B737-8	66368	ff 04.01.25, dd 28.01.25, lsd fr Air Lease Corp
9M-MVG	B737-8	66442	ex N57004, ff 26.11.24, dd 10.01.25, lsd fr Air Lease Corp
9M-MVI	B737-8	66375	ex N4022H, N4022T, ff 22.12.24, dd 27.01.25, lsd fr Air Lease Corp

We welcome any feedback on this listing

(The listing is alphabetical with reference to the registration of the country of origin. Columns indicate the registration, type, construction number and notes.)

Korean Air has accepted delivery of what might prove to be one of the final aircraft to wear its existing livery. Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, HL8392 (c/n 37390), seen here in Seattle on December 30. The Seoul-based airline received the aircraft on January 17, becoming the 14th member of its 787-9 fleet V1IMAGES.COM/ NICK SHEEDER

KOREAN AIR
HL8392
DREAMLINER

The latest news from maintenance, repair and overhaul providers

By Nigel Pittaway

FL Technics Indonesia wins CASA approval

FL Technics announced on January 29 that its Indonesian subsidiary has been granted Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) approval. Following this, FL Technics Indonesia is now able to deliver a comprehensive range of aviation maintenance services from its facilities at I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport at Denpasar on the island of Bali and Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in Jakarta, Sumatra. The company said the move underscores is commitment to supporting continued growth and the development of the Indonesian aviation sector – particularly in Bali, which is a rapidly expanding international air traffic hub. It is the first MRO provider to offer services in Bali and said that CASA regulatory approval will have a positive impact on the local economy, as well as the broader aviation sector in the country.

Martynas Grigas, CEO of FL Technics Indonesia, explained: "Receiving CASA approval is a pivotal moment for [us] as it not only strengthens our ability to provide comprehensive aviation services for Boeing 737s (Classic, NG, and MAX) and Airbus ceo and neo models at both Denpasar and Jakarta, but also supports Indonesia's broader goals for tourism and aviation. This approval aligns with the government's vision to enhance Indonesia's tourism sector. Our expanded capabilities will help ensure a safe and efficient travel experience for visitors to Bali." (Photo FL Technics)

Lufthansa Technik grows global presence

Lufthansa Technik recently announced an expansion of its existing facilities in Tulsa in Oklahoma, new repair and modification facilities in Calgary and Malta, and an engine MRO agreement with China's Hebei Airlines.

On February 6, Lufthansa Technik Component Services (LTCS) reported it had broken ground on an expansion to its facility in Tulsa, marking the beginning of the next phase of its component repair services business in the Americas. The latest expansion will add an additional 25,000sq ft of floor space, taking the total area of the facility to more than 140,000sq ft. The new building is expected to be completed by the end of 2025 and will house administration and a new avionics workshop. The company said the work will also include the renovation of existing hangars and 90 new workstations will be created. Thomas Illner, managing director and head of region Americas at LTCS, said: "With this expansion, we are enhancing our capacities and capabilities to support airlines in the Americas while strengthening our position as a strategic partner in the region."

On February 13, Lufthansa Technik announced it had signed a 15-year multi-billion-dollar contract with WestJet to service the Canadian carrier's CFM International LEAP-1B engines installed in its Boeing 737 fleet. The MRO provider is to establish a new engine repair station in Calgary, Alberta, which will be dedicated to LEAP-1B near-wing and quick-turn work. Operations in the new facility are set to begin in 2027 and WestJet will be the launch customer. Alexis von Hoensbroech, WestJet Group CEO, said: "WestJet was founded on the idea of improving air travel and making it affordable for Canadians. This historic contract award will allow us to bring critical engine repair operations home to Canada and provide greater efficiency and cost certainty to a critical part of our operations, all while demonstrating our commitment to improving our competitiveness and supporting the Alberta economy."

In a further expansion announcement, Lufthansa Technik Malta revealed on March 12, that it will create a new facility to conduct 787 cabin modifications. The 68,900sq ft hangar is planned for completion in autumn 2026 and will be used to perform base maintenance services plus cabin modifications as a Boeing-licensed Service Centre. The hangar will be able to accommodate a single widebody aircraft, with three further narrowbody parking spots outside the building.

Harald Gloy, COO Lufthansa Technik, explained: "Lufthansa Technik Malta will be the first location worldwide where [we] will carry out work on the 787 Dreamliner as a Boeing-licensed Service Centre for cabin modifications. This will not only create new options for our customers, but also highly qualified jobs in Malta."

Finally, Lufthansa Technik and Shijiazhuang-based Hebei Airlines recently strengthened their existing co-operation agreement with the signing of an Engine Maintenance Services contract. The deal covers CFM International CFM56-7B engines installed on the Chinese-carrier's 737-800 fleet, and the work will be performed at Lufthansa Technik's engine shop in Hamburg. Chen Hongbo, General Manager of Hebei Airlines, said: "Up until now, our collaboration has focused on Mobile Engine Services. [Now], we are coming together to lay the foundation for the next step in our partnership. I am thrilled that, moving forward, we will also be working with Lufthansa Technik as an experienced and trusted partner in the field of Engine Maintenance Services." (Photo Hebei Airlines)

The latest news from maintenance, repair and overhaul providers

By Nigel Pittaway

New deals for AFI KLM E&M

Air France Industries KLM Engineering and Maintenance (AFI KLM E&M) signed new component maintenance contracts with Air Côte d'Ivoire and Air Canada in February. The agreement with Air Côte d'Ivoire is a five-year extension to an existing component support contract. Under the renewed deal, the flag carrier will expand its Airbus fleet from five A320 Family aircraft to eight and add two A330neos from 2025.

MY Dakouri, head of fleet management at Air Côte d'Ivoire, commented: "This contract extension with AFI KLM E&M marks a crucial milestone for [the airline]. Their expertise and support are vital as we expand our regional network in West and Central Africa and open new international routes, notably to Paris/Charles de Gaulle and Beirut. This collaboration will enable us to enhance our service quality and operational efficiency, ensuring a seamless travel experience for our passengers."

The MRO provider has also signed a ten-year contract with Air Canada, covering component support for the carrier's planned fleet of 58 Boeing 787 widebodies. The new agreement will include the establishing of a stock pool in Toronto to support the expanding fleet, which is expected to grow from 39 aircraft to 58 by 2029.

Josh Vanderveen, VP of Air Canada Maintenance, said: "The support for our growing 787 fleet will not only enhance our service reliability but also fortify our position as a leader in the aviation industry. This agreement is a strategic milestone in the ongoing modernisation of our fleet so we can keep delivering a world-class travel experience to our passengers." (Photo Boeing)

ST Engineering increases CFM-56, LEAP-1A work

Singapore-based ST Engineering announced on February 10 that its Commercial Aerospace business has secured MRO contracts from two undisclosed operators in the Middle East, covering heavy maintenance services for their CFM International CFM56-7B and LEAP-1A engines. The work is expected to be undertaken at ST Engineering facilities in Asia, although the company did not mention a specific location.

Tay Eng Guan, Head of Engine Services at ST Engineering, said: "As a trusted engine MRO partner, we are continuously investing in our capabilities and services to better support our customers globally. Our market presence in the Middle East has been growing in recent years and our latest contracts with the two new Middle Eastern customers provide a strong foundation for collaboration with operators in this region." (Photo ST Engineering)

Liebherr expands Middle East presence

Liebherr-Aerospace announced on February 10 that it is expanding its presence in the Middle East with the launch of a new service centre at the Mohammed bin Rashid Aerospace Hub, Dubai South, close to Dubai/Al Maktoum. The 25,833sq ft facility is scheduled to open in early 2026 and will cater to the regional demand for aftermarket repair services for Liebherr products. It will be a European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) Part 145 certified service centre with a focus on component repair of air management systems.

Alex Vlielander, Liebherr-Aerospace & Transportation's chief customer officer, said: "The expansion of our MRO capacities is one of the key elements for continuous extension of our customer support and services portfolio in the Middle East region. It enables us to service more components in-house and in-region, thus eliminating logistic routings and reducing turnaround times." (Photo Liebherr-Aerospace)

Fly Across signs with Embraer

Fly Across MRO has become an Embraer Executive Jets Authorised Service Centre, the airframer announced on March 5, 2025. With the signing of the new agreement the Mexican MRO provider will offer base maintenance services for Embraer's Phenom and Praetor series of business aircraft at its facility at Toluca International Airport in Mexico. Also included in the deal is support for Embraer's Legacy 450 and 500 aircraft. The MRO is now able to offer both scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, including aircraft-on-ground (AOG) support and drop-ins.

Frank Stevens, VP of global MRO centres for Embraer Services & Support, said: "It is a pleasure to welcome Fly Across MRO to Embraer's Authorised Service Centre Network. We are pleased to grow our footprint in an important market like Mexico and in a strategic location for our operators. Embraer is growing its presence in the country and continuing to enhance our services and support capabilities and capacity in Mexico." (Photo Embraer)

All change at Duxford

As part of the Imperial War Museum's (IWM) 'Transforming Duxford' project in a bid to boost the airfield as a major tourist destination, the Duxford Aviation Society (DAS) has been forced to move three items from The British Airliner Collection outside permanently. DAS said that the Avro York, de Havilland DH106 Comet 4B and de Havilland DH104 Dove will all be moved from their former hangar home, with the team now turning their attention to their "future preservation".

The Comet and Dove will be slotted into airliner row with the rest of the collection. The former will be parked alongside its BOAC stable mate, the Vickers Super VC10. The latter will be placed at the eastern end of the row next to the Airspeed Ambassador. Meanwhile, the York will be positioned outside hangar 3.

To make room for the Comet, the Aurigny Trislander has been moved to the western end of the line-up, next to the British Airways Landor liveried BAC One-Eleven. The Royal Flight BAe 146 has also been moved outside the Workshop Cafe on the old hangar base.

To make the space, all the aircraft that required moving had to be jacked up and had their axle stands removed before being lowered back to the ground and "shuffled along."

In a statement, DAS said it was "dismayed" by the move but supported IWM's vision for Duxford. "Keepers of historic aircraft are facing a critical shortage of indoor display space," DAS explained. "It is causing major headaches for those who conserve some of our most valuable airframes. The cost of hangar space and complex priorities make running our major aviation museums very challenging."

They added: "As museums, they bear a heavy responsibility for maintaining their collections, but as businesses, they juggle generating visitor revenue with safeguarding their large objects. Many museums in the past became little more than perfectly preserved, static collections of relics with outmoded labels.

"We at DAS continue to press for rare, fragile aircraft to be under cover to aid this important requirement placed on all Accredited Museums."

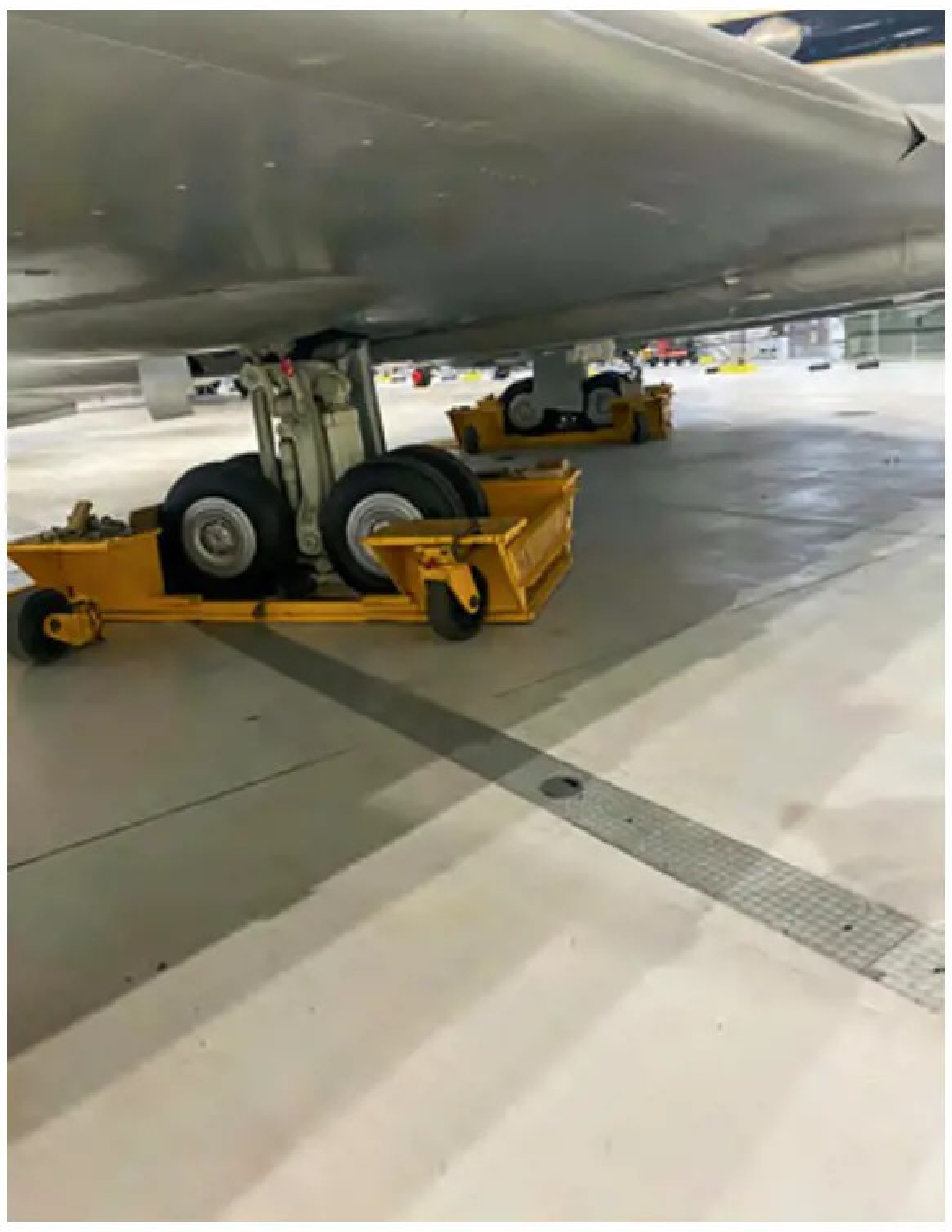
All of the aircraft in the British Airliner Collection have historical significance. Still, the York and Comet hold particular importance, as DAS explained: "The Avro York is the only original RAF one in existence and operated in the Berlin Airlift at the start of the Cold War, flying the 100,000th ton of supplies into the beleaguered city. Although now in the paint scheme of its final owners (Dan Air), DAS has on several occasions said that it would support its repainting into its original RAF Cold War colours.

"The de Havilland Comet 4B is historic, starting the international jet age as the actual first scheduled passenger jet airliner to fly across the Atlantic non-stop."

Placing these iconic aircraft outside poses numerous challenges for the DAS team. Thankfully, they are experts in the field with an "enviable record" of solving the issues that come with it.

Regarding the preservation plans, the team said: "We have arranged for an aircraft valet company, who specialises in executive jets, to polish our planes with a hi-tech (and expensive) ceramic polish. This product is said to prevent UV rays and help keep off the dirt for three years before it needs further polish. We are also having UV filters in the shape of vinyl masks fitted to the cabin windows to try and prevent the Perspex windows from crazing and clouding over. This will also protect the interior fabrics. These preventative measures are very costly but will hopefully prevent the need for regular repaints." (All images provided by DAS)

B·O·A·C
WH725
G-APDB



Letters to the editor

Dear Editor,
I have read with my usual interest, the March issue of *Airliner World*. One item that stood out for me was the lower picture on page 48 and the fencing. It brought back memories of my visits to London/Heathrow as a boy when similar fencing was all that prevented one from getting on to the airfield itself.

The public viewing area was adjacent to what was then considered to be the terminal building alongside the Bath Road. The departing aircraft taxied by very close, so much so that I recall waving to an aunt, visible at the window of a BOAC Stratocruiser as it departed for New York.

In later years, I would go to the Queen's Building at Heathrow and the observation platform to watch the comings and goings of all types of aircraft, props, and jets from all manner of airlines.

Those were the days, with my next trip to London/Heathrow being to board an A350 of Japan Airlines (JAL) to Tokyo.

How times have changed in the world of aviation.

Kind regards,
Clive Hawkins

Ed: Thanks for the trip down memory lane, Clive. I have many fond memories of the countless hours spent at Birmingham Airport's fantastic viewing lounge in the late 1980s and 1990s – they were happy days indeed. It's a real shame that most airports no longer offer such facilities.

Dear Editor,
Your wonderful article, 'Flying the Goose', in Issue 308, March 2025, brought back many aviation memories.

I checked my records for January 1974 and found my PanAm 747 flight New York/JFK to San Juan/Luis Munoz Marin International Airport, connecting on to a Prinair de Havilland Heron to St Croix/Henry E Rohlsen, and then the most memorable hop from St Croix to St Thomas/Cyril E King Airport on an Antilles Air Boats Grumman Goose.

The engine noise and vibration were incredible, and before the flying boat reached enough speed to get on the 'step', all I could see was a huge amount of sea spray. Landing on the water at St Thomas, then full power again to get up the ramp, was a great experience.

Thank you for reviving my 50 years back travels
Mike Nicholson
Hants, UK

Ed: Thanks for the letter and picture Mike. We're glad you enjoyed the article and are only too happy to revive those memories! It sounds like quite the trip.

Dear Editor,
Regarding the January 2025 issue, letters to the Editor, 'Baby Bus bows out' article, I am fortunate to have experienced a couple of flights onboard the TAROM Airbus A318.

Over the years, I frequently travelled to Romania on business, as often as every second month, for more than 12 years. Most of the time, I would fly in from Amsterdam, the easiest gateway from my home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Between Amsterdam and Bucharest, I had a choice of two airlines, KLM and TAROM. Typically, I would pick TAROM, no offence to KLM, which I would often fly with from Miami to Amsterdam.

My first Airbus A318 flight was from Amsterdam to Bucharest on November 3, 2015. My second flight was on February 19, 2017, on the same route.

Of all my 8,000 passenger hours, the Queen of the Sky, the 747, has always been my favourite aircraft. But my favourite single-aisle aircraft are the Airbus A318 and A319. Both are sporty-looking, comfortable, and very safe.

And so were the two flights I made on the Airbus A318. Both were complemented by the TAROM flight attendants' usual friendly smiles and attentive service. They were two wonderful rides onboard a sporty bird in the air.

Thank you for *Airliner World* magazine, I love it.
Petter Syse

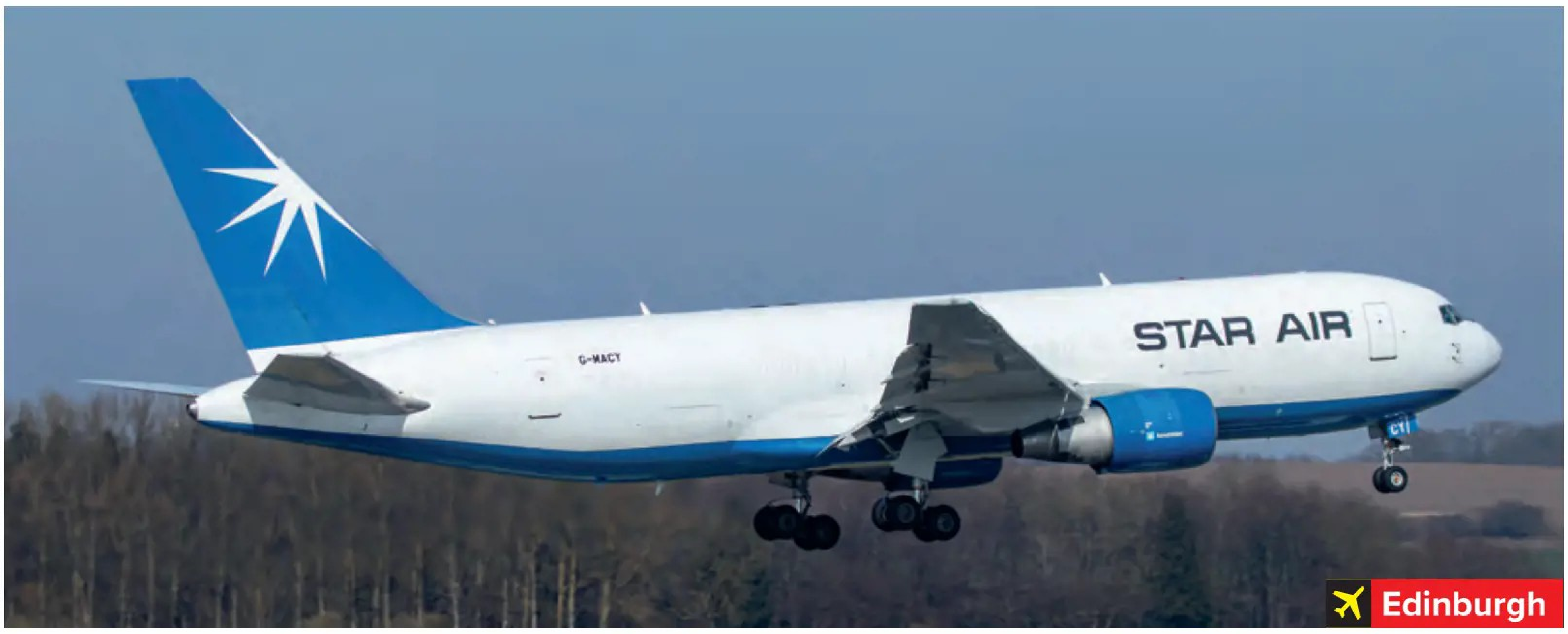
Ed: Thanks for the letter, Petter. After spending many hours onboard an Airbus A319 in a previous life, I can say that it truly is a wonderful aircraft. Sadly, I have never been fortunate enough to fly on the Baby Bus, the A318, but as you say, I have always thought it looked very sporty!

GET IN TOUCH *WITH AIRLINER WORLD*

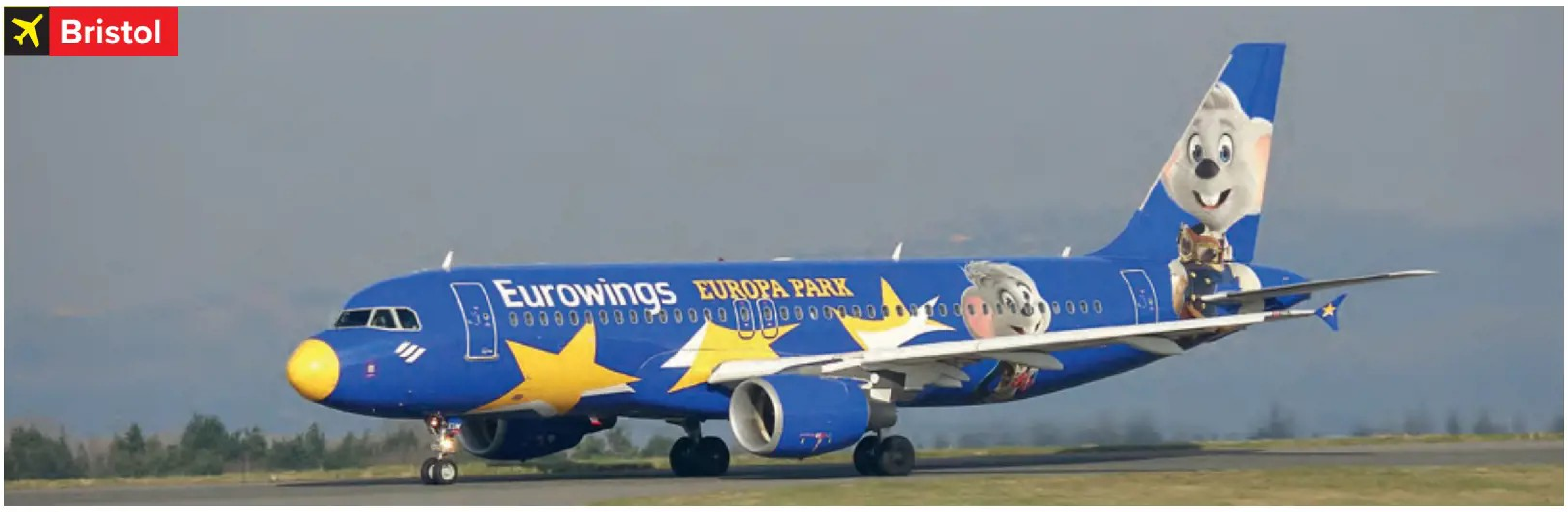
Do you have a historical tale, burning question, or comment about the magazine to share with our global audience? Get in touch via airlinerworld@keypublishing.com with the subject 'Letters to the Editor', or drop us a message on Facebook.com/AirlinerWorld, on Twitter @_AirlinerWorld or join the debate on our Key.Aero forum. As we return to the editorial office, we are also able to welcome letters once again – the postal address is: ***Airliner World*****, PO Box 100, Stamford, Lincolnshire, PE9 1XQ**

UK Visitors

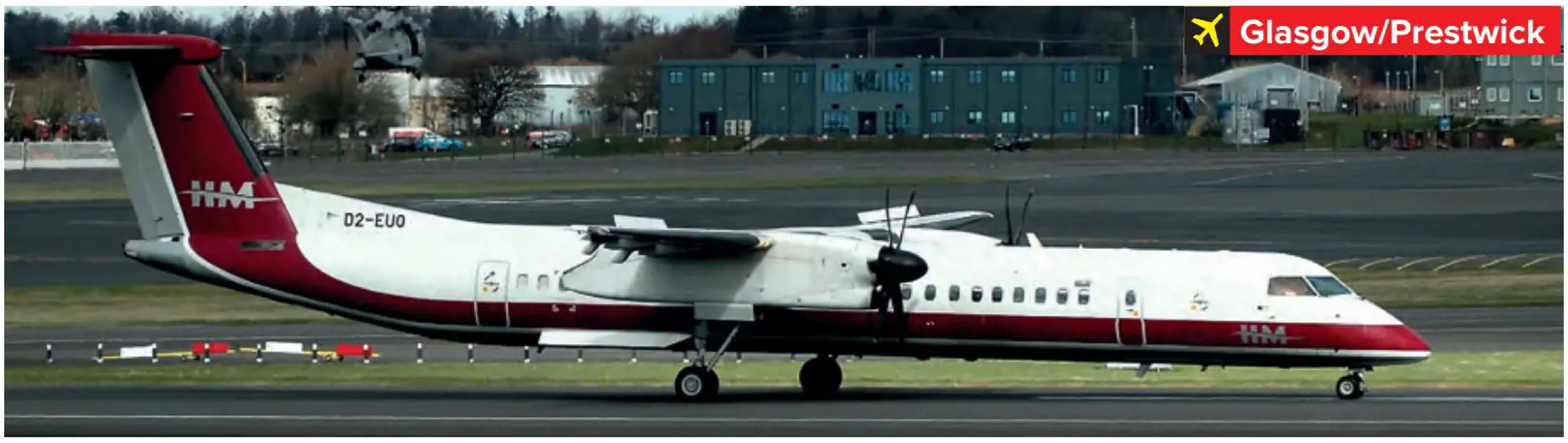
We present a selection of images of visiting aircraft from airports around the UK. For the most part, they're commercial jets, but almost all of them are unusual types, wearing new or unique liveries, or first visits by an airline or airliner to a particular airport. If you see something out of the ordinary while on your travels, please send in your pictures. Photos can be emailed to **airlinerworld@keypublishing.com** Please ensure you provide full details with the images, particularly the date, location, airline name and aircraft identity



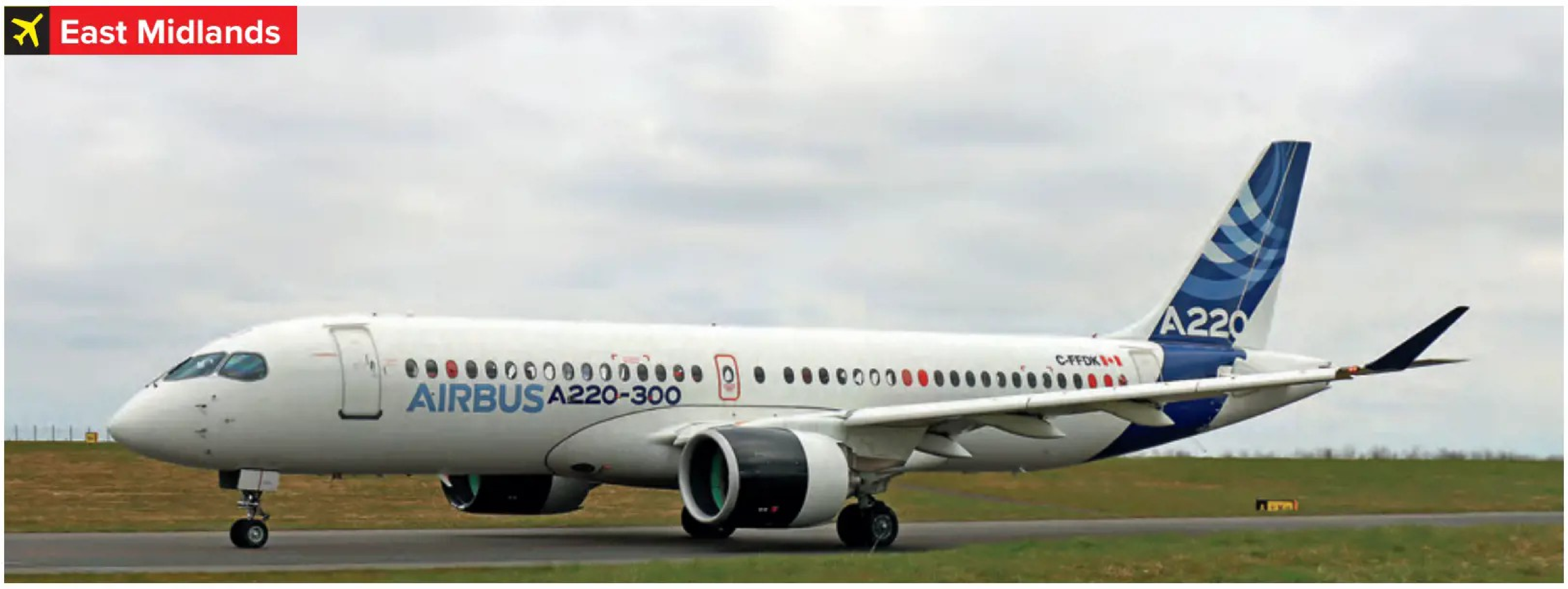
Pictured touching down at Edinburgh after a training flight from Belfast/Aldergrove is this Maersk Air Cargo UK Boeing 767-204BDSF. The 36-year-old airframe, G-MACY (c/n 24457), started life on the British register as G-BPFV with Britannia Airways in March 1989. It later served with numerous other carriers, including Air Europa and Excel Airways and was converted into a freighter in 2005, serving with the Danish division of Maersk Air Cargo until February this year SH



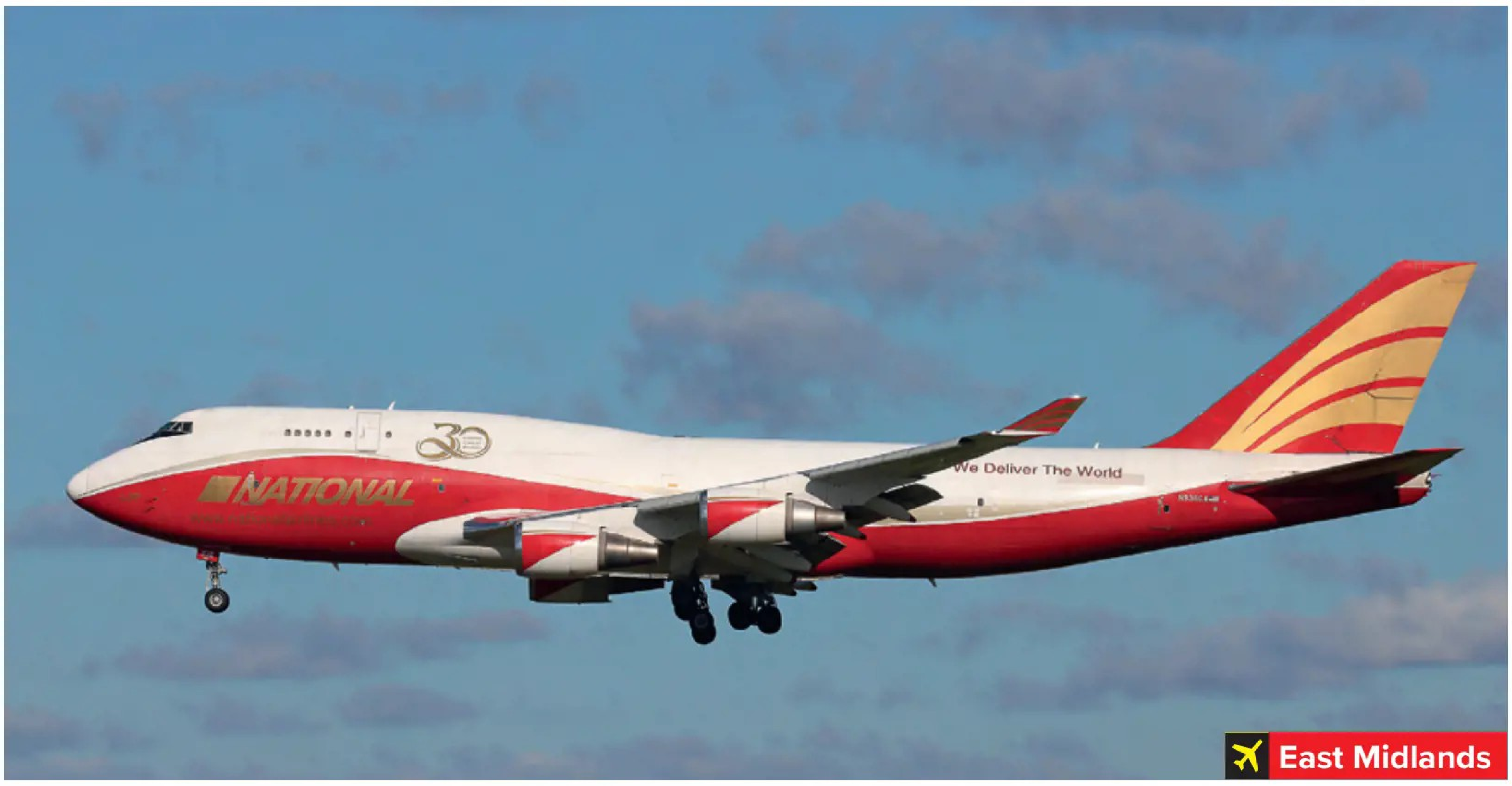
Wearing an eyecatching colour scheme is this Eurowings Europe Malta Airbus A320-214, 9H-EUM (c/n 3121). The aircraft was operating a charter service between Bristol and Dusseldorf on behalf of Volkswagen. It is painted in the 'Europa Park' colours, promoting Germany's largest theme park
MATTHEW PAYNE



This De Havilland Canada Dash 8-400 belongs to Angolan charter operator Heli Malongo Airways. It was pictured at Glasgow/Prestwick on March 14 after arriving from Cascais, Portugal. After refuelling the 15-year-old airframe, D2-EUO (c/n 4312), departed for Reykjavik
JOHN TIMPANY

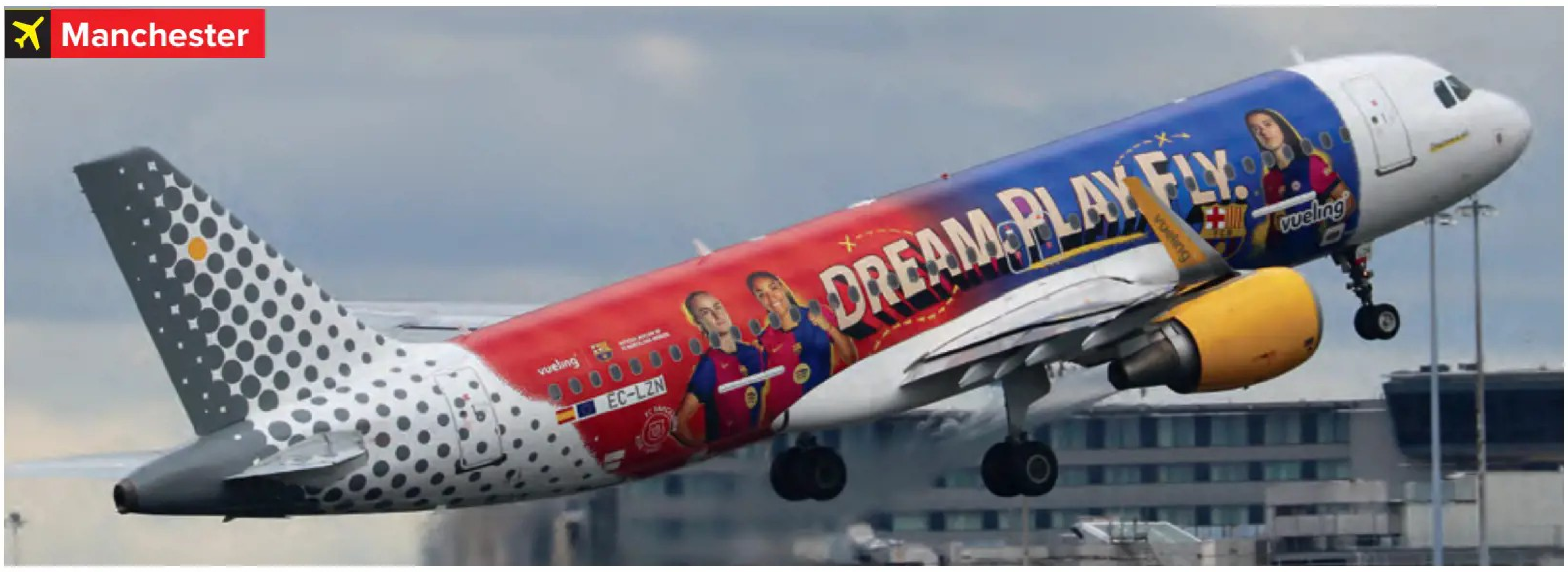


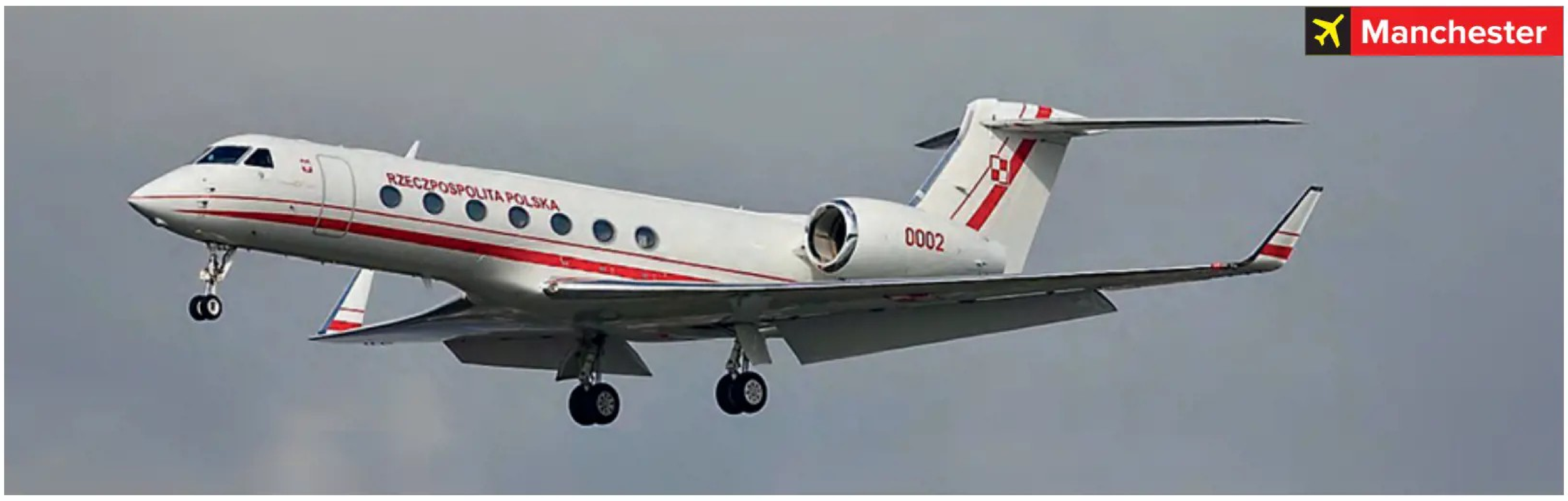
Wearing Airbus' house colours is this A220-300, C-FFDK (c/n 55001), captured at East Midlands on March 16 after flying in from Toulouse in France. While the A220 is a rare sight at East Midlands, this particular airframe had visited back in 2019 to be painted by Airborne Colours into an Airbus livery following the European manufacturer's takeover of the Bombardier CSeries programme
JOHN GREGORY



Making its first visit to East Midlands airport on February 27, was this Boeing 747-446BCF, N936CA (c/n 25308), belonging to National Airlines. The 33-year-old jumbo was originally delivered to Japan Airlines in November 1991. It later served with Evergreen International Airlines before being delivered to National Airlines in September 2021. It now wears this vibrant 30th anniversary scheme
JOHN GREGORY

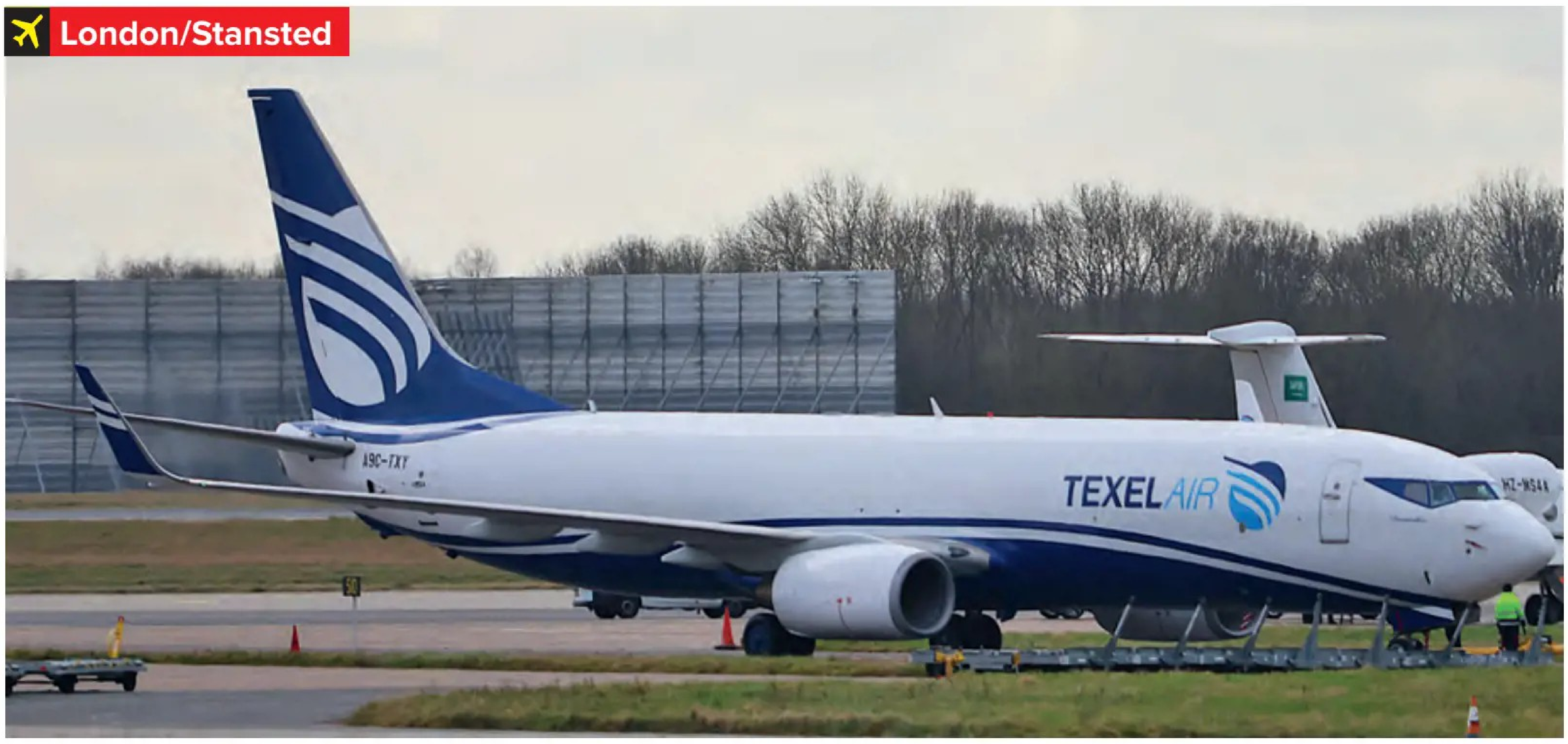
Operating flight VY8747 from Manchester to Barcelona/El Prat on March 13 was Vueling Airbus A320-214, EC-LZN (c/n 5925). The aircraft has been with the Spanish low-cost carrier since January 2014 and currently wears unique 'Dream. Play. Fly.' colours to promote the airline's sponsorship of the Barcelona women's football team, FC Barcelona Femení
SPENCER BENNETT





The Polish Air Force operates two Gulfstream G550 aircraft on behalf of Poland's government. This example, 0002 (c/n 5554), was delivered in July 2017, joining its stablemate 0001 (c/n 5547), which had arrived in June. It is pictured here flying into Manchester on March 7
PAUL ROWLAND

Arriving at London/Stansted on March 11 from Istanbul was this Texel Air Boeing 737-8Q8BCF, A9C-TXY (c/n 29374). It departed for Bahrain the following day. The jet started life with Air China in 2007 and now belongs to Texel Air, a cargo carrier and MRO provider based in Bahrain
DUNCAN DELLOW



The latest training aids available for the aviation professional

Second UK training centre for Skyborne

Skyborne Airline Academy is to add a second UK training centre at Bournemouth Airport in Dorset, adding to the organisation's current bases at Gloucestershire Airport and Vero Beach, Florida, in the US. The company said the expansion will enhance its ability to meet the "growing demand for world-class airline pilots in the UK, Europe and beyond."

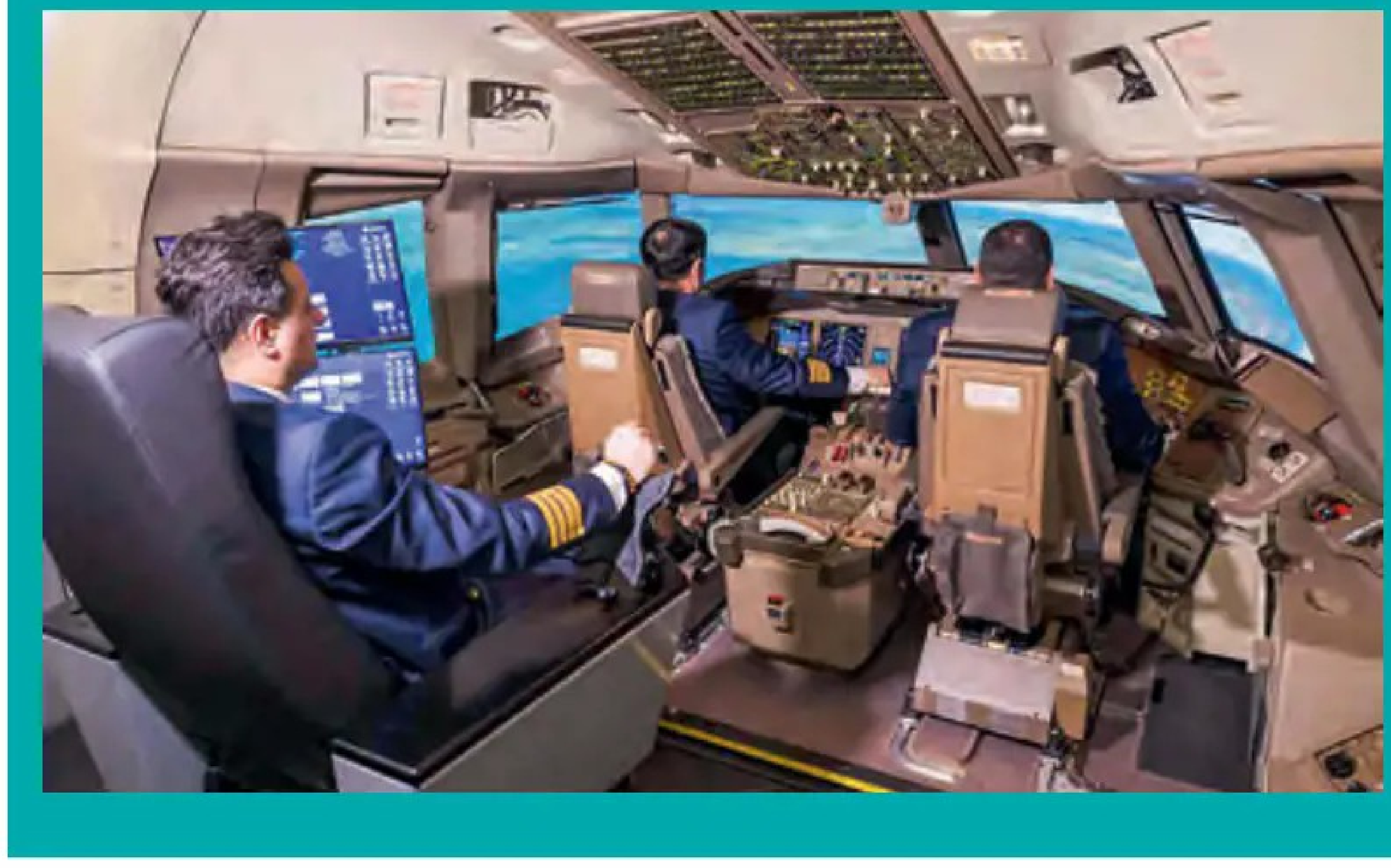
Lee Woodward, CEO of Skyborne, said: "Since Skyborne's inception, we have steadily grown trainee enrolment numbers and airline partnerships. This expansion has led Skyborne to develop and launch its second UK base. Bournemouth Airport's bustling commercial environment will give our trainees invaluable experience, developing them into well-rounded, highly skilled pilots ready for today's airline industry. Supporting local economic growth, we will also be creating ground and flight instructor career opportunities, as well as maintenance and administrative roles in the South West."

Carla Booth, UK commercial director at Skyborne, added: "Our decision to invest in a new training centre reflects our ongoing commitment to delivering high-quality pilot training globally. With Bournemouth Airport home to airlines including TUI, Ryanair and Jet2.com, it will serve as a stable and strategic base for our airline programmes and future growth."

Initially, the 14,000sq ft Bournemouth facility will focus on ATPL ground school and multi-engine instrument rating (MEIR), with further training modules and programmes to follow. (Photo Skyborne Airline Academy)

Boeing 777 sim lands in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's National Aviation Academy (NAA), a public education institution which is part of state-owned Azerbaijan Airlines, hosted a ceremony to officially launch its Boeing 777 flight simulator, developed in partnership with Silk Way West Airlines and aimed at enhancing training capabilities.



Produced by L3 Harris Commercial Aviation Solutions, the simulator represents the latest technology in flight simulation, providing a realistic training environment. It encompasses three variants of the Boeing 777: the 777F, 777-200LR and 777-300ER. With cutting-edge flight simulation and visualisation technologies, it aligns with the highest international aviation standards and facilitates a broad spectrum of qualification sessions, pilot evaluations and certification training.

The simulator underwent a comprehensive evaluation by specialists from the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) in February this year. Following a successful certification process, its official endorsement by local aviation authorities will "further reinforce NAA's dedication to upholding international aviation standards" according to a statement from the school.

The implementation of the simulator in Azerbaijan will greatly lower expenses associated with training local professionals, enhance the accessibility of training programmes and remove the necessity of sending pilots overseas for their training. (Photo NAA)

American Airlines Cadet Academy expands

American Airlines has expanded its Cadet Academy programme by adding ATP Flight School in Charlotte, North Carolina, to its network of flight schools. ATP is a longstanding partner of American's wholly-owned regional carriers Envoy Air, Piedmont Airlines and PSA Airlines. Since 2004, more than 1,500 of its graduates have joined the carriers.

"We're excited to welcome ATP's Charlotte location to our growing network of flight school partners," said Nathan Gatten, American's executive VP of American Eagle, corporate real estate and government affairs, who leads the teams managing the Cadet Academy. "We're providing access to high-quality training in a region that is very important to our operation, strengthening our efforts to maintain a sustainable pilot workforce."

The airline said cadets attending ATP will benefit from "industry-leading airline-oriented training, including access to state-of-the-art flight simulators and aircraft." Additionally, trainees will have the opportunity to connect with American pilot mentors, who will provide personalised guidance and support throughout their training journey. Upon successful completion of their courses, Cadet Academy graduates will be guaranteed a place with one of American's wholly-owned regional carriers, paving the way for a smooth transition to a mainline career.
(Photo American Airlines)

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ABOVE: ***TUI Airways Boeing 787-8, G-TUIB (c/n 34423) Alfie, was delivered to the airline in May 2013*** AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/SIMON WILSON

AAIB details 787 'minimum fuel' incident

The UK's Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) has released its report into a serious incident that left a TUI Airways UK Boeing 787 Dreamliner within minutes of running out of fuel.

The incident occurred at 0830hrs on December 21, 2023, at Birmingham Airport in the West Midlands, and involved 787-8, G-TUIB (c/n 34423) *Alfie*. A total of 291 passengers and ten crew members were on board. Although the aircraft landed safely, it did so with less minimum final reserve fuel than outlined in its Operational Flight Plan (OFP).

Winds

The Boeing 787 had departed Cancun, Mexico, on a transatlantic service to Manchester Airport, where it was due to arrive at 0735hrs. However, it entered a holding pattern due to high winds in the north of the United Kingdom, which were causing considerable disruption to operations at British airports.

The crew had been aware of the situation but believed the winds would dissipate before they arrived, adding just 2,169lb (984kg) of fuel at Cancun, enough for 15 minutes of flight. The addition gave a final reserve fuel total of 4,213lb (1,911kg). It was calculated that a minimum of 7,092lb (3,217kg) would be needed for the nominated diversion site of East Midlands Airport, with another 328lb (149kg) to reach Birmingham.

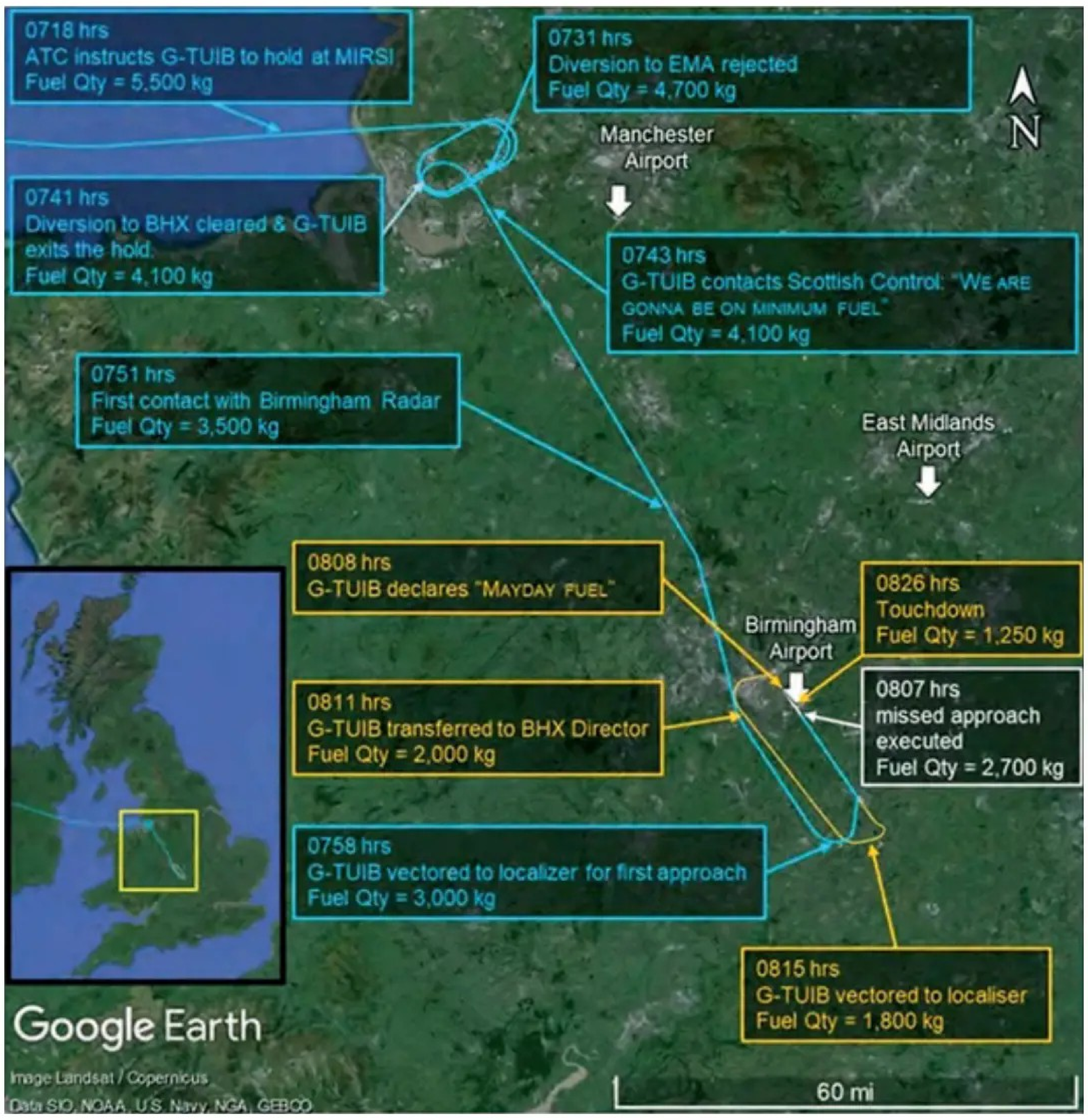
At 0718hrs, the 787's pilot monitoring contacted Manchester Radar and was informed that seven aircraft were on hold ahead, with an expected approach time unavailable. Runway 23R, in use at Manchester, was experiencing surface winds of 28kts (51.9km/h) at 280° (50° off centreline), with gusts of up to 41kts (75.9km/h).

Diversion

As the widebody waited to land at Manchester, the pilot monitoring informed East Midlands Radar at 0728hrs that they may divert to the airport. Three minutes later, the 787 was told they "cannot accept your size aircraft", resulting in contact being made with Birmingham air traffic control (ATC), which confirmed it could. A request to Manchester Radar to divert to Birmingham was made at 0737hrs and was approved four minutes later when approximately 9,039lb (4,100kg) of fuel remained.

The minimum needed for the diversion was 7,421lb (3,366kg), with the pilot monitoring informing Scottish Radar that "we are gonna be on minimum fuel". During the transit to Birmingham, the Engine Instrumentation and Crew Alerting System (EICAS) announced 'insufficient fuel'. The aircraft intercepted the glide path for Runway 33 with 6,393lb (2,900kg) aboard.

RIGHT: ***The Boeing 787 Dreamliner flight deck*** BOEING


0718 hrs
ATC instructs G-TUIB to hold at MIRSI
Fuel Qty = 5,500 kg
0731 hrs
Diversion to EMA rejected
Fuel Qty = 4,700 kg
N
Manchester Airport
0741 hrs
Diversion to BHX cleared & G-TUIB exits the hold.
Fuel Qty = 4,100 kg
0743 hrs
G-TUIB contacts Scottish Control: "We are gonna be on minimum fuel"
Fuel Qty = 4,100 kg
0751 hrs
First contact with Birmingham Radar
Fuel Qty = 3,500 kg
East Midlands Airport
0808 hrs
G-TUIB declares "Mayday fuel"
0826 hrs
Touchdown
Fuel Qty = 1,250 kg
Birmingham Airport
0807 hrs
missed approach executed
Fuel Qty = 2,700 kg
0811 hrs
G-TUIB transferred to BHX Director
Fuel Qty = 2,000 kg
0758 hrs
G-TUIB vectored to localizer for first approach
Fuel Qty = 3,000 kg
0815 hrs
G-TUIB vectored to localiser
Fuel Qty = 1,800 kg
Google Earth
Image Landsat / Copernicus
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
60 mi

LEFT: ***G-TUIB recorded ground track annotated with significant events*** GOOGLE EARTH/AAIB

The Dreamliner was cleared to land at 0805hrs, but 1.15 miles (1.85km) out at 240ft (73m), a wind shear warning sounded, with the crew initiating a missed approach, per standard operating procedures. At this point, just 5,952lb (2,700kg) of fuel remained: during the climb out, the crew announced: "TOM 173 reporting mayday, mayday, mayday, TOM 173 mayday fuel" to Birmingham Radar. The controller instructed the 787 to climb to 4,000ft (1,219m) for a further ILS approach before the airliner was passed to Birmingham Director (*see below*), during which the EICAS annunciated 'fuel qty low'.

A Wizz Air Airbus A321neo, HA-LZY (c/n 10933), already on frequency, was directed to land before India Bravo, forcing the 787 to fly a wider pattern – 61 miles (98km) instead of 29 miles (46km) – further depleting fuel reserves. The Dreamliner finally touched down at Birmingham with 2,756lb (1,250kg), below the OFP minimum final reserve fuel.

Lessons

Internal investigations were initiated at both East Midlands and Birmingham airports. Scottish Control spoke to East Midlands ATC before the jet's request to divert, asking what kind of aircraft it could accept. Airfield Operations advised that it could only take two Boeing 737-800-sized airliners; the AAIB report stated that ATC was informed that "anything else would be dependent upon the ground handling agent capacity at the time".

This information was passed to the flight crew at 0731hrs. The report continued: "Subsequently, at 0736hrs, the ATC assistant spoke with the airport Centre Control Room [CCR], which is responsible for the allocation of aircraft stands, and established that the airport could accept a Boeing 787. This was then passed to the radar controller, who sought to contact G-TUIB at 0740hrs but received no response."

East Midlands later formally established that the CCR was responsible for communicating the type and number of aircraft the airport could accept to ATC, with requests for additional or larger aircraft to be passed to the CCR.

The volume and complexity of traffic at Birmingham had resulted in an additional controller position, the Birmingham Director, being utilised. The Director had sequenced HA-LZY ahead of G-TUIB. As stated in the AAIB report, "...the controller was faced with a complex and high workload scenario which resulted in the opportunity to prioritise G-TUIB while repositioning HA-LZY being missed. This resulted in G-TUIB flying an extended track even though it had declared a fuel emergency."

Birmingham ATC later issued an internal safety notice that emphasised controllers must assign an aircraft that had declared an emergency a priority category, ensuring it has an uninterrupted approach while considering the "sterilisation of the landing runway". AW

DATE	REG'N	C/N	TYPE	OPERATOR	FATALITIES	LOCATION	NOTES
February 1	N420AW	7640	Bombardier CRJ-200LR	American Eagle operated by Air Wisconsin	0	United States	Struck by a tug that had attempted to cross a taxiway at Chicago/O'Hare
February 3	C-FZXI	62883	Boeing 737 MAX 8	Sunwing Airlines	0	Canada	The aircraft was being pushed back from the gate at Toronto/Pearson when the tail cone hit a blast fence
February 5	JA868J	34845	Boeing 787-9	Japan Airlines	0	United States	Collided with a Delta Air Lines Boeing 737-832 at Seattle/Tacoma
February 5	N3737C	30799	Boeing 737-832	Delta Air Lines	0	United States	Impacted by a Japan Airlines Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner at Seattle/Tacoma
February 6	N321BA	208B5613	Cessna 208B Grand Caravan EX	Bering Air	10	United States	Crashed while en-route from Unalakleet to Nome, Alaska
February 10	UR-ELB	14005	Antonov An-26B-100	Air Urga operated for United Nations	0	Central African Repulic	Suffered a runway excursion at N'Dele Airport. Left-hand main gear collapsed with damage to the left-hand wing
February 13	N939WN	36646	Boeing 737-7H4	Southwest Airlines	0	United States	Encountered turbulence during a flight from Seattle/Tacoma to Oakland, injuring one cabin crew member
February 17	N932XJ	15194	Bombardier CRJ-900LR	Delta Connection operated by Endeavor Air	0	United States	Written off after suffering a landing incident at Toronto/Pearson

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ABOVE: ***Airbus A350-941, N527DN (c/n 720), emerged from the manufacturer's Toulouse/Blagnac production facility wearing a special centenary livery***
V1IMAGES.COM/ CLÉMENT ALLOING

One hundred not out

From its origins as a crop-dusting service to becoming one of the world's largest airlines, Delta Air Lines turned 100 in March. **Thomas Haynes** details the highs and lows of its century-long history

Getting to your 100th birthday as a human is quite a feat, but for an airline it's an exceptional accomplishment considering the industry's proclivity for volatility and instability. Only a handful of carriers are in the exclusive centenarian club: KLM (1919), Avianca (1919), Qantas (1920), Aeroflot (1923) and Finnair (1923).

Delta Air Lines is the oldest continuously operating airline in the United States. It is also the world's largest airline by several metrics including revenue, assets, market capitalisation and brand value. The carrier follows closely behind American Airlines in second place for passengers carried and available seats. It has the third-largest fleet of any airline, with 987 aircraft in its mainline roster.

History

Delta Air Lines can trace its lineage to 1925 when two entomologists, BR Coad and CE Woolman, began using a Huff-Daland Duster biplane to dust insect-infested cotton plantations. Over the next four years, the small venture based in Macon, Georgia, increased its fleet to five aircraft before venturing into the realms of air transport. The operator acquired an air mail and passenger service certificate with the intention of opening a connection to Dallas, Texas, via Jackson, Mississippi, and Shreveport and Munroe, Louisiana.

Flying under the new name Delta Air Service with a pair of Travel Air 6000s, the company flew its first revenue service on June 7, 1929. By September it had expanded its network further, adding Fort Worth, Texas, to the west and Birmingham, Alabama, in the southeast. The controversial Air Mail Act of 1930 briefly held up Delta's expansion, though by 1934 it had acquired six Stinson SM-6000-B Airliners from American Airways (today's American Airlines) and had launched passenger services from Atlanta, Georgia. One of the main driving forces behind the fledgling airline was its co-founder and president, Clarence E. Faulk Sr, who led the company until his death in 1951.

The operator added a Lockheed Model 10 Electra and four Douglas DC-2s to its fleet as its Atlanta presence increased, the latter giving way to the larger DC-3 in 1942. In the period immediately following World War Two, the Civil Aeronautics Board awarded Delta rights to operate from some of the country's major transport hubs, including Atlanta, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Miami and New Orleans.

To cope with the expansion, Delta acquired a further eight DC-3s from the US government, along with a number of ex-USAAF C-54s. Civilianised as DC-4s, these entered service between Chicago and Miami in 1947, provoking a reaction from rival operator Eastern Air Lines, which introduced pressurised Lockheed Constellations on the route. These could fly higher and faster than the DC-4s, and the competition decimated load factors for Delta until it acquired upgraded DC-6s the following year. This cat-and-mouse rivalry continued well into the mid-1950s: Eastern countered with the Super Constellation only to be pegged back once more by the DC-7 and Delta's

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Gold Crown Service. The new Douglas aircraft featured both an eight-seat Sky Room and a six-seat Sky Lounge on board, offering an unprecedented level of comfort for passengers.

Jet age

Unlike its major rivals – American Airlines, Braniff International Airways and Eastern – Delta resisted the urge to buy turboprops and transitioned directly to jet aircraft from its Douglas propliners. The carrier was the first to introduce the DC-8 when it operated the New York to Atlanta service on September 18, 1959, just hours before United flew its first service with the type. The Douglas quadjet proved very popular and attracted customers away from Eastern's brand-new Lockheed L-188 Electra turboprops – in fact, such was the 'jet effect' that Delta's rival actually withdrew the type from routes where the two operated in direct competition.

The DC-8 was developed to perform long-haul intercontinental operations and, with this in mind, Delta moved to acquire a smaller aircraft with lower capacity for its shorter-haul routes. It selected the 84-seat Convair 880, the fastest commercial jet of the day, and was the first to operate the type. The airliner was perfect for Delta's route network and it became the mainstay of the fleet for 14 years.

In the meantime, the airline continued to search for a jet to serve its regional network. European manufacturers had taken the lead in this market with types such as the British Aircraft Corporation One-Eleven and Sud Aviation Caravelle being purchased by other US carriers. Again, Delta maintained its well-forged relationship with Douglas and opted for the DC-9, initially ordering 15 examples. The early -14 series were soon supplemented by the larger and more popular DC-9-32 model, Delta's fleet of which grew to 63 by 1970.

The airline's love affair with the DC-8 continued and, in 1968, it purchased the stretched -61 series to serve its high-capacity long-haul routes. The 258-seat aircraft offered a 60% increase in capacity over the older models, but cost just 10% more to operate. It was those economics that enabled the Super DC-8-61 to retain its position as the pearl of the fleet until it finally gave way to the Boeing 747. The jumbo jet was technically an aircraft that few domestic carriers required, but none could do without. Delta purchased five examples, though its unsuitability on transcontinental domestic services quickly showed and many carriers acquired the smaller McDonnell Douglas DC-10 as a more economical alternative. Yet again, the airline defied convention and opted for the Lockheed L-1011 TriStar – along with Trans World Airways (TWA) and Pan American World Airways (Pan Am). However, delayed delivery of the Rolls-Royce-powered jets forced Delta to acquire an interim alternative in the form of five DC-10s, making it the first airline to simultaneously operate all three widebody types.

In 1972, the carrier obtained access to the lucrative 'north-east corridor' which»

BELOW: ***The Douglas DC-3 played an instrumental role in the expansion of Delta's Atlanta hub during the 1940s***
BOB O'BRIEN COLLECTION

DELTA AIR LINES

ABOVE: ***Delta was a major customer for Douglas and the DC-8, which it operated for 30 years***
AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/ ATI COLLECTION

joined the US to Montreal, Canada, through its acquisition of Boston-based trunk operator Northeast Airlines. Delta retained Northeast's fleet of Boeing 727-200s as it was expecting its own from Boeing and would eventually become the largest operator of the type in the world.

It was during this period that Delta established itself as an industry leader, successfully navigating the energy crisis of the 1970s and the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978. Throughout the next decade, it increased its presence both internationally and domestically, acquiring Western Airlines in 1986 to become the fourth-largest carrier in the US. In 2000, Delta became a co-founder of the SkyTeam airline alliance, along with Aeroméxico, Air France and Korean Air. Also that year, the company adopted a new corporate identity, complete with a contemporary 'widget' logo.

Like the majority of US carriers, it suffered badly from the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 – this, combined with rising fuel prices and a worldwide reduction in the number of passengers flying, led to the carrier posting its first loss in six years. To avoid insolvency, drastic measures were taken and, after reviewing its network, unprofitable routes were dropped. In a bid to improve cash flow, it sold regional carrier Atlantic Southeast Airlines to SkyWest Airlines for $425m, although both carriers continued to operate under the Delta Connection network. However, the cost-cutting exercise proved unsuccessful and, on September 14, 2005, Delta Air Lines filed for Chapter 11 protection under the US bankruptcy law.

The airline's management was forced into drastic restructuring decisions: 9,000 of the airline's 52,000 employees were laid off and the remaining staff had their wages cut by 9%, while 15% was slashed from executive pay packets. The route network underwent further scrutiny and seat capacity was reduced by 20% on domestic routes and 25% on international services. Despite these brutal cuts, the airline continued to fly to more than 300 destinations across 52 countries and even became the leading carrier across the Atlantic. The hard work and tough decisions eventually paid off and, by the first quarter of 2007, the carrier reported a profit of $155m in operational revenue. The turnaround was complete and Delta Air Lines emerged from Chapter 11 protection on April 30, 2007, after 19 months.

To coincide with its exit from bankruptcy, the carrier's livery was updated to feature a new all-red widget logo on the forward fuselage and on the tail for the first time since

BELOW: ***The airline operated more than 100 McDonnell Douglas DC-9-32s between 1967 and 2010***
AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/ WORLD AVIATION ARCHIVE

ABOVE: ***Five examples of the original Boeing 747-100 series were purchased by Delta in the early 1970s, including N9896 (c/n 19896). The type was unsuitable for transcontinental services and all five were returned to Boeing by 1977***
AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/CARL FORD

the 1980s. Dubbed 'Onward and Upward', the scheme was designed to "honour Delta's heritage, while at the same time reflecting a modern look." With the advent of next-generation composite aircraft, Delta also needed a livery that covered the belly of the fuselage, which until then had been polished bare metal. The airline still wears the same livery to this day. It's no stranger to keeping schemes for a long time as its Classic livery remained on the fleet for more than 30 years, beginning with the introduction of the DC-8-51 in 1962 until the late 1990s.

Mega merger

While Delta was trying to work its way out of bankruptcy protection, rival US Airways had itself left Chapter 11 in 2005 and launched a takeover bid on November 11, 2006. Delta's Board turned down the initial US Airways offer and vowed to continue striving for recovery. Despite a second, increased bid, which Delta's creditors declined, US Airways finally withdrew its offer in January 2007. In fact, so remarkable was Delta's recovery that less than two years after leaving Chapter 11 protection the company had the financial resources to acquire Northwest Airlines on October 29, 2008, creating a truly global airline with major operations in every region of the world.

Pre-Northwest merger, the carrier's fleet was exclusively American-made, with the exception of Airbus A310s acquired from Pan Am. The combining of the two airlines' fleets meant that Delta was introduced to Airbus' A320 Family line-up for the first time in the form of A319s and A320s. Within the widebody segment, the A330-200 and -300 also made an appearance.

Following the merger with Northwest, Delta Air Lines became one of the world's largest passenger carriers and, according to its figures, posted an operating profit of £1.2bn for 2011. This was achieved despite the cost of fuel rising 25% against the previous year. Its post-bankruptcy improvements extended beyond the purely financial, with its on-time performance increasing to 83%. It also reduced the number of complaints it received by 35%. However, it was not all plain sailing, with the announcement that it was to close its regional subsidiary Comair from September 29, 2012, citing rising costs and a falling demand for its Bombardier CRJ aircraft.

By 2012, Delta's fleet comprised a diverse mixture of aircraft from Airbus, Boeing and McDonnell Douglas, a result of its acquisition of Northwest Airlines. It was then the largest operator of MD-88s and MD-90s in the world and flew more A330s, 757s and 767s than any other airline in the US. Delta embarked on a fleet renewal programme in the early 2010s, kicked off by an order for 100 737-900ERs in August 2011, which were planned to replace its 757-200s, MD-88s and older A320s. In May, the carrier announced it had agreed a deal with Southwest Airlines for the procurement of the fleet of Boeing 717s previously operated by wholly-owned subsidiary AirTran Airways. The 88 examples enabled Delta to retire its last remaining DC-9-50s and were effectively a like-for-like swap, the airline retaining its capacity but restructuring and upgrading its domestic fleet.

For its longer-haul routes, in an order which was later cancelled,

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BELOW: ***Western Airlines was bought by Delta in 1986, which led to the reintroduction of the McDonnell Douglas DC-10. The carrier had operated five examples on a short-term lease some 15 years earlier***
BOB O'BRIEN COLLECTION

DELTA
DELTA
785

ABOVE: ***Delta fielded a total of 183 Boeing 727-200s between 1972 and 2003***
AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/
WOLFGANG MENDORF

Delta inherited a $2.2bn deal for 787 Dreamliners from Northwest. The first of the 18 aircraft, which were initially planned for use on its routes to Asia, were expected in 2020 with deliveries due for completion within two years. The well-publicised delay of the Boeing jet led Delta to postpone plans to retire its 747-400s, instead refreshing the interiors of several examples as an interim measure. Delta didn't rush to cancel the 787 order, opting to push delivery back to 2022 so that it had more time to consider its options. However, in 2016 it made up its mind and ditched the commitment saying its decision was "consistent with Delta's fleet strategy." At the time, there was no mention of which next-generation widebody would be selected in the Dreamliner's place, but the A350 and A330neo were later chosen by Delta to form the backbone of its long-haul fleet. The former was officially ordered by the carrier in 2017, while the latter was selected in 2014.

For the second and final time in its history, Delta retired its Boeing 747 fleet in 2017, becoming last US passenger airline to do so. The 16 -400s acquired through the Northwest merger in 2008 had marked the return of the jumbo to Delta's fleet for the first time since 1977. The carrier had acquired five -100s in 1970 and 1971, but returned them to Boeing before the end of the decade after realising they were too big for its routes.

In a major step, Delta acquired Singapore Airlines' 49% stake in British carrier Virgin Atlantic in 2013. The move increased the American operator's access to the important London and transatlantic markets. A year later, a joint venture was formed between the two airlines to take advantage of each other's strengths in their respective markets. Commenting on the tenth anniversary of the partnership, Matteo Curcio, Delta's SVP for the EMEAI region, said: "The partnership deal was a game changer for Delta enabling us to up competition on the most popular business routes between London/Heathrow and the US, offering customers greater choice, while providing Virgin Atlantic unparalleled access to Delta's network across North America." The joint venture was further strengthened in 2020 when Air France-KLM joined. The airlines now operate a joint daily schedule of up to 86 nonstop flights in both directions between the UK and US – nearly 40% more than in 2014 – including up to 34 peak-day departures from London/Heathrow to 15 US gateways.

BELOW: ***The Atlanta-based carrier was late to the Boeing 737, acquiring its first -200s in 1983 on lease from the manufacturer***
AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/
WORLD AVIATION ARCHIVE

ABOVE: ***Only three major US carriers purchased the Lockheed L-1011 TriStar and Delta was one of them. This -500 series ex-Pan Am example, N763DL (c/n 1197), joined the carrier in 1989 and remained in service for almost ten years*** ETH-BIBLIOTHEK ZURICH, BILDARCHIV

Delta became the US launch customer of the Airbus A220 – then known as the Bombardier C Series – when it placed an order in April 2016 for 75 CS100s. Ed Bastian, Delta's then-incoming CEO, commented: "As we reshape our fleet for the future, the innovative onboard experience of the C Series is a perfect complement for the top-notch service provided every day by Delta people. These new aircraft are a solid investment, allowing us to take advantage of superior operating economics, network flexibility and best-in-class fuel performance."

The carrier accepted its first example of the A220-100, N101DU (c/n 50020), on October 25, 2018. The Canadian-built narrowbody was pressed into service on February 14, 2019. The following year, Delta added the stretched -300 variant to its roster with the arrival of N302DU (c/n 55070) on October 22, with the 130-seat narrowbody entering service on November 17. The jet is notable for being the first A220 to roll off of Airbus's production line in Mobile, Alabama, its US production facility for A320 and A220 Family aircraft.

Today, the Delta mainline fleet spans 987 airframes at the time of writing, and even with retirements, the size of the roster has continued to increase. Airbus and Boeing jets have become the cornerstones of its line-up following the exit of the McDonnell Douglas aircraft in 2020. Over the coming years, the makeup of the younger contingent of its fleet will shift almost entirely to Airbus as approximately two-thirds of the around 300 aircraft it has on order are due to come from the European manufacturer. Delta's only commitment to Boeing comes in

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LEFT: ***An early customer for the Boeing 767, Delta took delivery of N102DA (c/n 22214), the second example off the production line, in 1982. The jet was named*** The Spirit of Delta ***and is preserved at the Delta Air Transport Heritage Museum*** AIRTEAMIMAGES.COM/ BOB ROBINSON

Since 2007, Delta has fielded the world's largest Boeing 757 fleet. It currently boasts a roster of 113 examples DELTA AIR LINES

ABOVE: ***The acquisition of Northwest Airlines in 2008 led to Delta adding the Airbus A330-200 and -300 to its long-haul fleet***
DELTA AIR LINES

the form of 100 737 MAX 10s, which it is expecting to receive, later than planned, in 2027 owing to certification delays. Within the widebody space, Delta is expecting deliveries of its 20 A350-1000s to begin in 2026.

At the end of 2024, the carrier revealed it was rolling out a new cabin interior across its fleet, beginning with the 757 and following with its A350-900s in early 2025. Featuring fresh seating materials, enhanced lighting, a renewed colour palette, new decorative motifs and signature branding, the nose-to-tail transformation is based on extensive feedback and research, the airline said. The inclusion of the 757 indicates Delta's continuing commitment to the narrowbody, which is has no plans to retire.

Delta spreads its extensive fleet across several hubs, including nine in the US. Its main Asian base is now Seoul/Incheon, which replaced Tokyo/Narita after Delta ceased flying to the Japanese airport in 2019 and instead switched its focus to nearby Haneda. In Europe, its main hubs are London/Heathrow, Amsterdam/Schiphol and Paris/Charles de Gaulle, the latter two operated in conjunction with its SkyTeam partner, Air France-KLM Group. The largest of its hubs by far is Atlanta/Hartsfield Jackson, where it operates around 1,000 flights a day to 215 destinations. Minneapolis and Detroit – which act as the airline's primary gateway to the Asian market –are next, handling 330 and 320 daily services, respectively. Meanwhile, Delta has developed New York's airports at La Guardia and JFK from focus points to full hubs and also maintains a presence in Los Angeles and Boston.

Centenary celebrations

Delta ushered in its 100th anniversary with a presence at CES 2025 in Las Vegas on January 7, 2025. Spearheaded by a first-of-its-kind

Keeping 'em Flying

Delta TechOps, a full subsidiary of Delta, is responsible for maintaining the fleet and performs a range of duties up to and including heavy C- and D-checks. The engineering division maintains line stations across the carrier's network, employing more than 10,000 mechanics and engineers, but its largest is the purpose-built 250,000m^2 facility at its Atlanta headquarters.

This maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility, which is the largest in North America and the third-largest in the world, serves more than 150 customers and is certified to undertake work on all Airbus and Boeing types in Delta's mainline fleet, as well as the Bombardier and Embraer jets operated by its regional subsidiaries and affiliates. It also holds certifications for aircraft it has never or no longer operates, including the McDonnell Douglas MD-11, MD-88 and MD-90, Boeing 747 and Airbus A340.

Monitoring the location and serviceability of 987 aircraft is a highly complex task. Delta does this from its Operations Control Centre (OCC), based at its headquarters in Atlanta. The facility, which houses dispatch, maintenance and systems personnel among others, is manned around the clock.

Weather poses one of the greatest hazards to the safe operation of Delta's aircraft, particularly across the US, where flights may have to contend with tropical storms in the south and blizzards in the north. The OCC constantly monitors weather systems throughout its network to minimise delays and cancellations, while multiple colour-coded display screens show the status of Delta's flights, allowing the team to maintain a fine balance between aircraft serviceability, passenger safety and the carrier's on-time performance.

BELOW: ***For the second and final time in its history, Delta retired its Boeing 747 fleet in 2017, becoming the last US passenger airline to do so***
DELTA AIR LINES

ABOVE: ***Delta is modernising its narrowbody Airbus fleet with the A321neo, the first of its current 71 examples arrived in March 2022*** DELTA AIR LINES

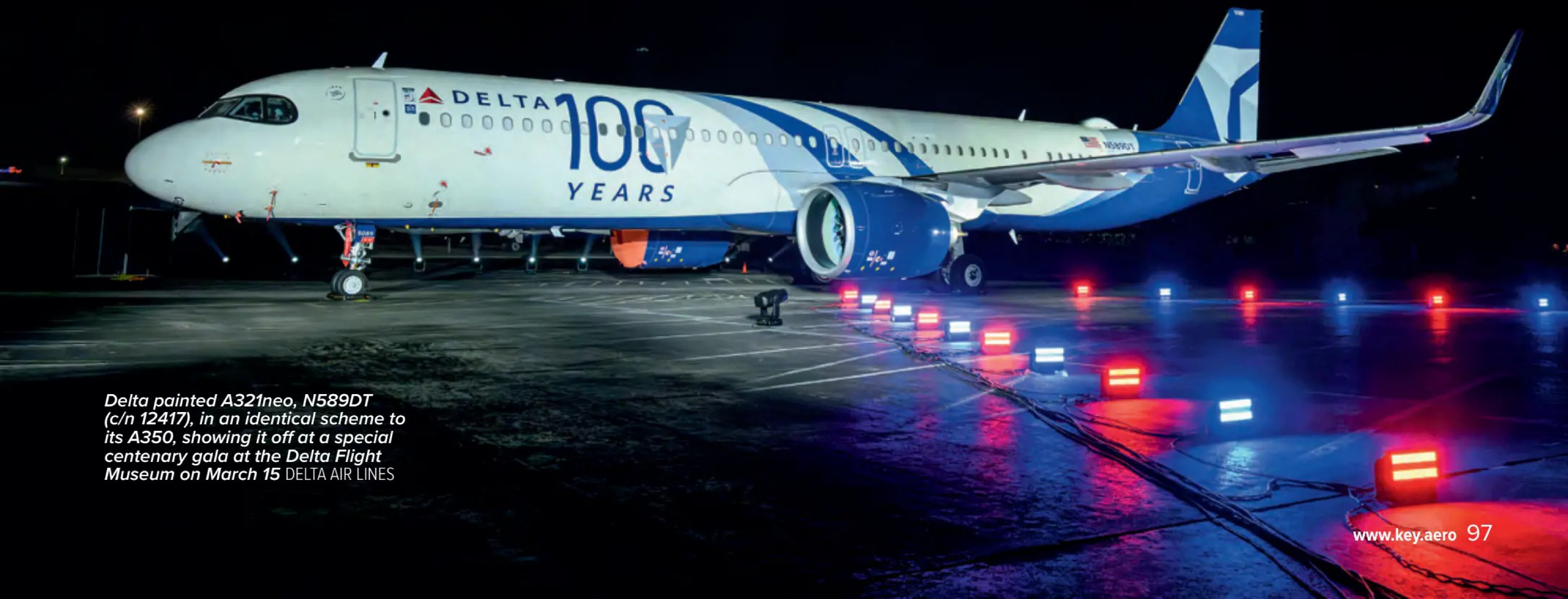
keynote delivered by CEO Ed Bastian at Sphere, Delta's appearance at the tech event "commemorated a century of ground-breaking aviation milestones and the airline's commitment to innovation."

Commenting on reaching the centenary, Bastian said: "For the past 100 years, Delta has been driven by a simple mandate: always put people first. In everything we do. It's as true today as it was in 1925, when the very first Delta pilots took to the skies. Those values carried us from being a tiny start-up crop-duster to a global airline that connects the world. We can only imagine how exciting the world must have seemed a century ago. The very concept of powered flight was only a few years old, but this brand-new technology carried the promise of changing the world. Traversing the skies at high speed created opportunities that would have been impossible in the days of rail and ships. It brought people and communities together as never before in human history. It feels similar today. New marvels like AI, the digital revolution and sustainable technology are giving us incredible tools to transform the travel experience. But amid the wonder of new technology, we've always understood that the entire point of innovation is to lift people up. [That] mandate... continues to drive us forward, just as it has over the past 100 years."

Delta has painted two aircraft in special themed liveries to mark its centenary. Airbus A350-941, N527DN (c/n 720), emerged from the manufacturer's Toulouse/Blagnac production facility at the end of last year featuring an all-blue tail design. This would later develop on subsequent appearances into a full-blown centenary celebration livery. At the time of writing, the widebody – which first flew on February 20 – has yet to be handed over to the airline. Meanwhile, on the smaller end of the spectrum, A321neo, N589DT (c/n 12417), has been painted in an identical scheme and was handed over to the carrier on February 26. Despite being seen publicly since early January (and featuring in this very magazine in the April 2025 issue), Delta decided to wrap the aircraft in black plastic upon its arrival at its home hub in Atlanta on March 1, ahead of a centenary celebration at the Delta Flight Museum on March 15. Both liveries feature an all-blue design with a pair of sweeping lines covering the mid-fuselage. A large '100 Years' inscription with the Delta widget in the middle dominates the forward fuselage, leaving the 'Delta' logo looking somewhat insignificant in comparison.

In celebrating its centenary, Delta has joined an exclusive club and stands as a testament to a century of innovation and resilience. From its humble beginnings as a crop-dusting operation to becoming a global leader in air travel, its journey has not been without pitfalls, but instead reflects the evolution of modern aviation itself. As the airline embarks on its next chapter, its commitment to enhancing passenger experience, sustainability and operational excellence ensures it will continue to shape the future of flight. With a proud legacy behind it and ambitious goals ahead, Delta's 100-year milestone is not just a celebration of its past, but a promise of continued progress in the skies.

RIGHT: ***The airline became the US launch customer of the Airbus A220, then known as the Bombardier C Series, when it placed an order for 75 CS100s in April 2016*** AIRBUS/ PATRICK DESROCHERS



Delta painted A321neo, N589DT (c/n 12417), in an identical scheme to its A350, showing it off at a special centenary gala at the Delta Flight Museum on March 15 DELTA AIR LINES

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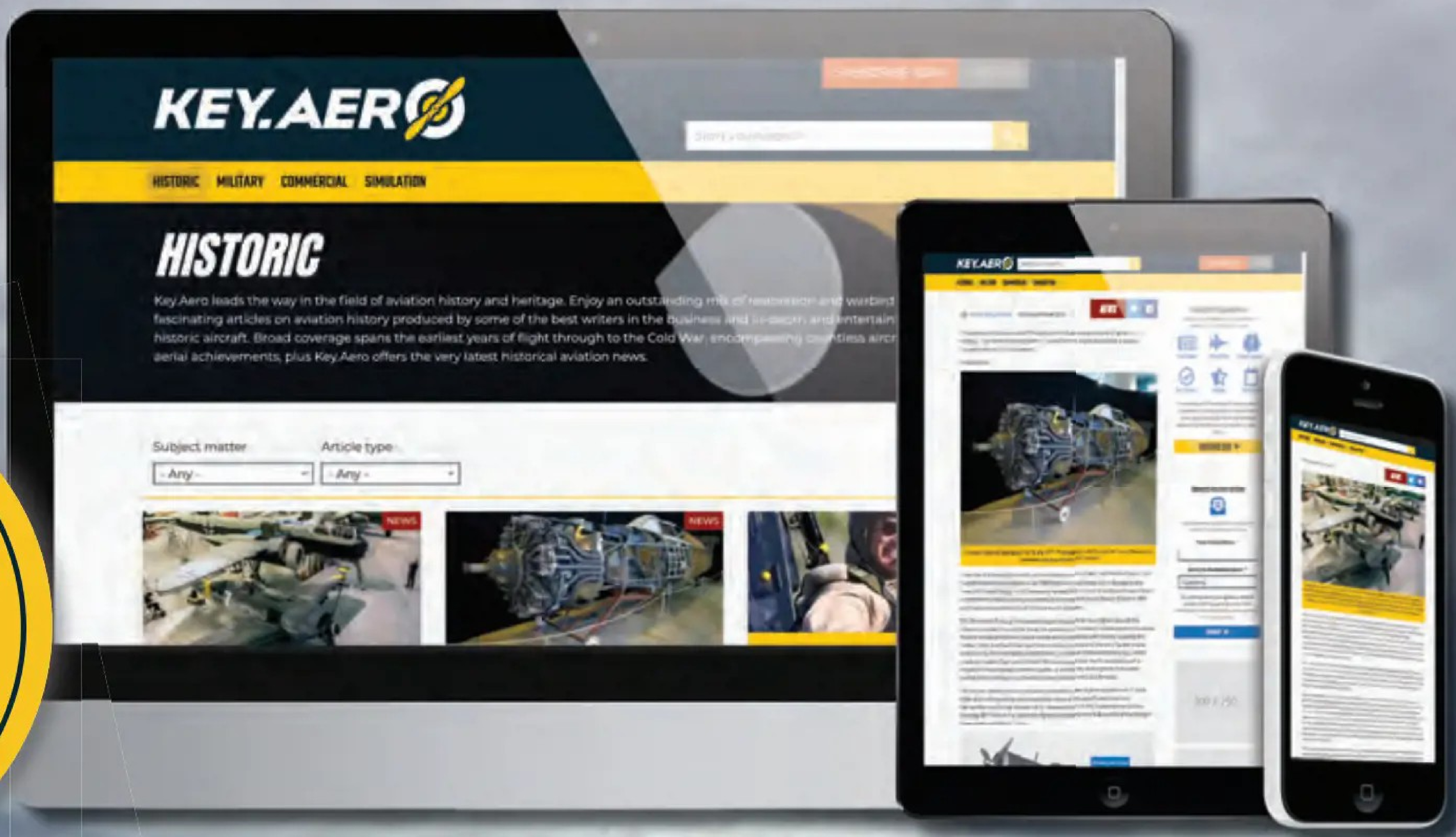
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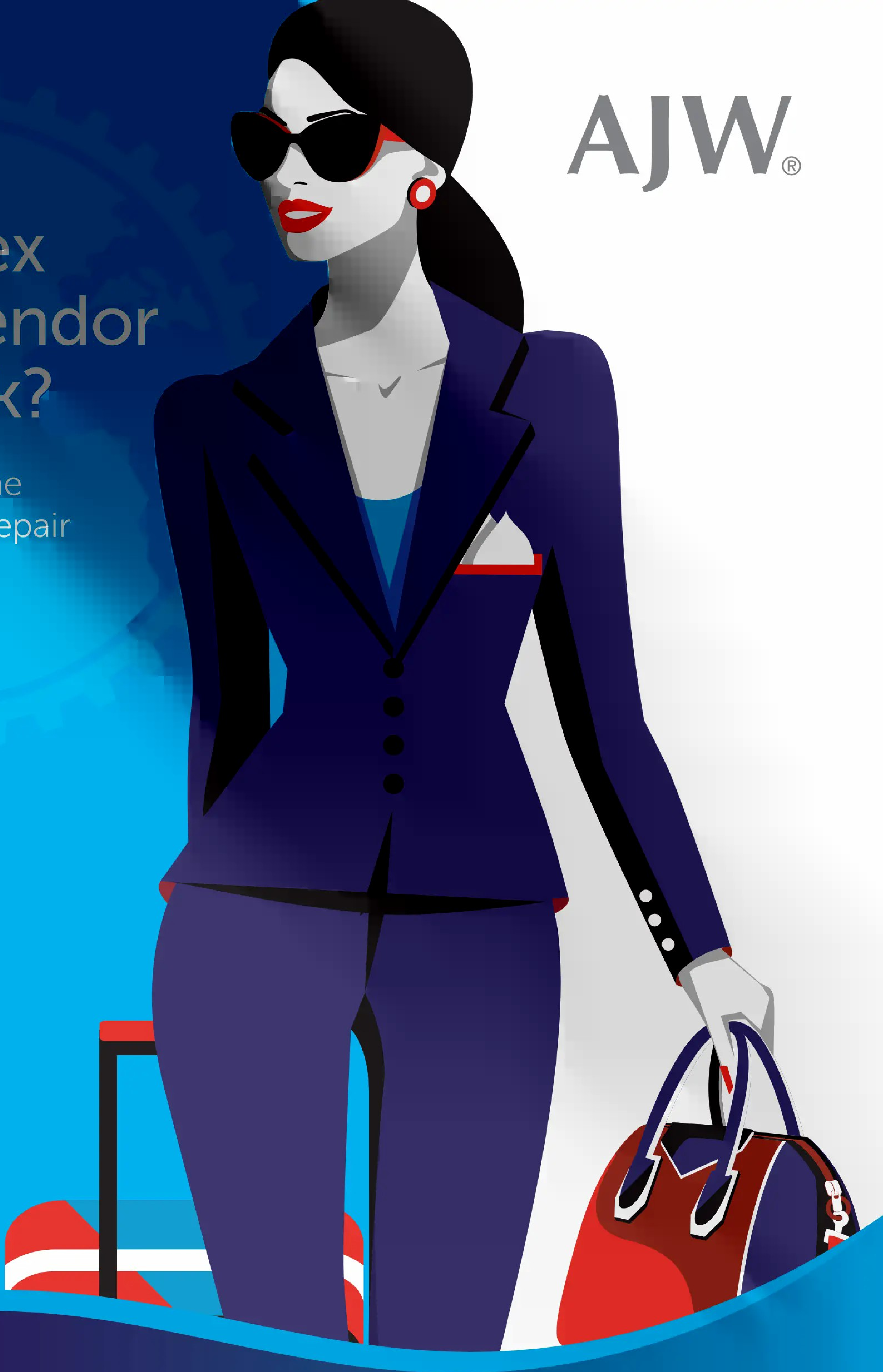

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